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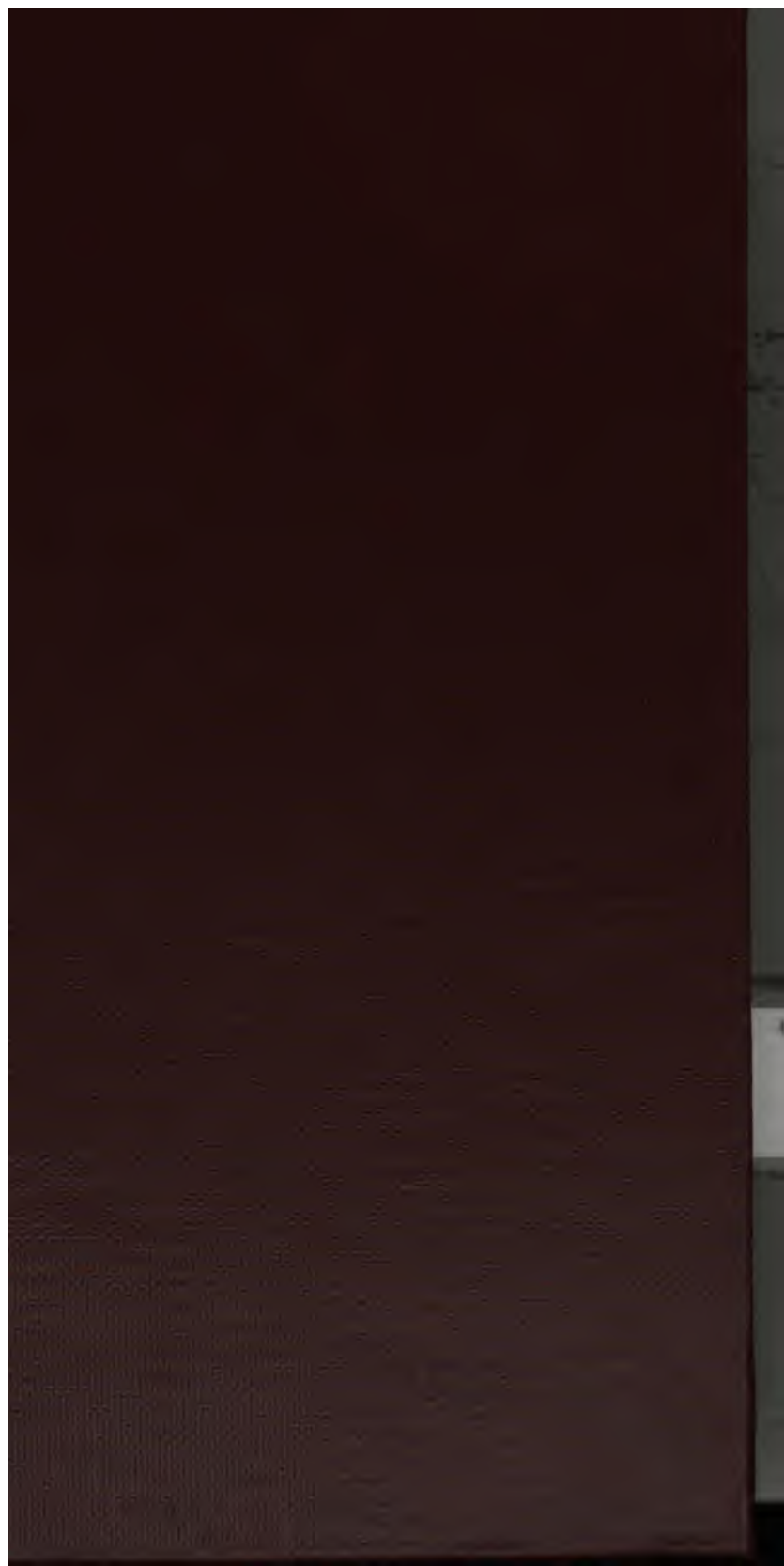
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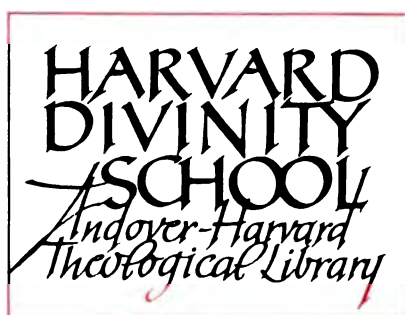
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2 A

VINDICIÆ CHRISTIANÆ:

A

COMPARATIVE ESTIMATE

OF THE

GENIUS AND TEMPER

OF

THE GREEK, THE ROMAN, THE HINDU,

THE MAHOMETAN,

AND THE CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS.

BY

THE REV. JEROME ALLEY, LL.B. M.R.I.A.

**RECTOR OF THE PARISHES OF BEAULIEU AND DRUMCARR,
IN THE DIOCESE OF ARMAGH.**



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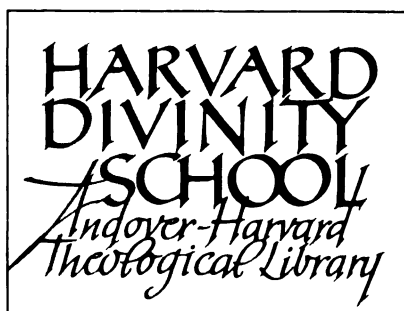
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TO HIS GRACE
LORD JOHN GEORGE DE LA POER
BERESFORD,
ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH,
PRIMATE AND METROPOLITAN OF ALL IRELAND,
&c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,
I HAVE humbly and diligently endeavoured, in the following pages, to enforce the Evidences of the Necessity and Reality of an Inspired Religion; and I hope the presumption may not be deemed wholly unpardonable with which I solicit permission to distinguish a Work on such a subject, by inscribing it to Your Grace.

Many exalted characters, my Lord, have been appointed by the wisdom of our kings to the See of Armagh, and have justified the purity of royal selection by their talents and their virtues. Among these high names, the three immediate predecessors of Your Grace have entitled themselves, I might almost



DEDICATION.

dered ministrant to public edification ; and the Translation of the Minor Prophets, the Observations on the Character and Conduct of Christ, and other works of similar importance, constitute a distinguished monument of his taste, his piety, and his erudition.

To you, my Lord, who knew him so well, and so frequently co-operated with him for the welfare of the church, it will be scarcely necessary to observe that Primate STEWART was endowed with talents, moral and intellectual, not inferior to those of his exalted predecessors. What the circumstances of the times, and the deficiency of funds, had rendered it impossible for those who preceded him to accomplish, the laudable liberality of Parliament enabled him to perform ; and he performed it with an energy and a wisdom as rare as they were effectual. The glebes, and manses, and churches, which were yet wanting, were supplied. The defects of clerical residence, hitherto unavoidable, were remedied. In the most secluded districts, the voice of the efficient pastor was heard, and the congregation was assembled and edified ; and while, in these instances, the ample grants of the legislature were appropriated under a prudent, vigilant, and fruitful superintendence, the various Boards for ecclesiastical regulation, and for the maintenance and inspection of public schools, received an impulse and a direction which rendered them beneficial, in the highest degree, to the church and to the nation. But of the distinguished person who was employed in a manner so consistent with

DEDICATION.

the obligations of metropolitan duty, these were not the sole labours, or virtues, which have attached to his name the unqualified respect and veneration of this country. The Clergy over whom he was more immediately placed, acknowledged the kindness and the care with which he consulted and promoted their welfare. The munificence of his private and public donations, and the warm, yet discriminating spirit which engaged him, so often, in the most gracious and generous interpositions, have been rarely equalled by the best and most beneficent of mankind. As a scholar, his attainments were ample. He was sufficiently instructed in polite, in elegant, and in sacred literature. Disdaining to be the polemic of a sect, he was the advocate of the Gospel. To the learning of the schools he added a sound judgment, and a cultivated taste; and, in the various Charges which he delivered to his Clergy, on the duties of the Christian ministry, he displayed the tempered fervour, and the impressive eloquence of an Apostolic Bishop, and never failed to command the attention, the respect, and the admiration of his auditory. Are we to wonder that the death of such a man should have been lamented as a national calamity? And might we not wonder if the virtues of such a man were not preserved and embalmed in the reverence of national recollection?

It was expected of His Majesty, my Lord, that He would raise to the See of Armagh, a successor worthy to occupy the station which had been illustrated and adorned by the virtues and the labours of these

DEDICATION.

exalted characters ; and the wisdom of His Majesty's appointment has been amply acknowledged. It is not solely, or chiefly, to Your Grace's hereditary rank, to your high birth, or to the distinctions derived from the noble and antient family to which you belong, that men advert. Your Grace has other and better claims to the respect of mankind. The talent and temper with which you fulfil the trust committed to your charge ; the patient and vigilant inspection which you extend from the humble school and church of the village, to so many diocesan and national institutions, and the Christian munificence with which you employ and consecrate the ample means committed to your hands ; constitute distinctions which adorn and brighten the accidents of rank, and compared with which the accidents of rank are " nothing worth." Such endowments as these, already recorded by the justice of the public voice, may not shrink from a comparison even with the virtues of Your Grace's immediate and venerable predecessor. They afford, in the estimation of the good and wise, the best and brightest illustration of the high dignity of the Primacy of Ireland. And we trust, humbly but fervently, that they will be long permitted, under a good providence, to contribute to private and public welfare, to support the interests of our national Church, and to promote the influence and the diffusion of that Religion, which, while it lays the foundation of peace, order, and happiness in this world, assures to the children of obedience the eternal felicity of the next.

DEDICATION.

In this wish and this language, my Lord, I do not merely express my own humble and valueless testimony, but record, feebly and inadequately, the public sentiment. Piety and virtue, in high station, cannot long remain unknown. There are yet truth and justice enough in the world, to acknowledge and record them; and, if there be any to impute what I have here said to the usual servility of dedication, a servility for which I know Your Grace would despise me, and for which, as certainly, I should despise myself, I appeal with confidence to that truth and that justice, and calmly and fearlessly shelter myself under the authority of their known and reiterated testimony.

Under these impressions, my Lord, I presume to tender the following Work to Your Grace; and to avail myself of the opportunity which is thus afforded me, of testifying the respectful deference with which

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD,

Your Grace's

Obliged and most obedient Servant,

JEROME ALLEY.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. I.

PREFATORY VIEW.

Sceptics—The plan of the Work—Systems, theories, and controversy rejected—Conclusion - - - - - p. 1

CHAP. II.

THE BEING AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

Sect. I. *The prevailing ignorance of all the nations of antiquity, except the Jews, on the subject—The mythology of the Greeks and Romans—Occasional elegance—Frequent extravagance and absurdity—The vilest qualities and vices deified—Celestial example—Ludicrous impiety of the stage—The schools—Zeno—Epicurus—Plato—Equal ignorance of the philosophers and the people.*—
Sect. II. *The gods of the Hindu—Contradictory, whimsical, and innumerable—Incarnations—Magic and necromancy—The golden egg of Brama—The whole system pernicious or absurd.*—
Sect. III. *The Koran—Magnificent and just descriptions of the Divinity—Practical corruption of the abstract doctrine—Instability of the divine purpose—Contradictory and inconsistent missions of Gabriel—The appetites and passions of Mahomet the rule and measure of his doctrines.*—Sect. IV. *The Deity of the Gospel—Purity, ubiquity, omniscience, and sovereignty of God—His moral and relative perfections—The condescension and mercy with which they are exercised—Their perfect harmony—Comparative estimate* - - - - - p. 15

CHAP. III.

PROVIDENCE.

Sect. I. *The Providence of the religion of Greece and Italy—Contradictory powers of Fate and Fortune—Proportional impotence of the gods—The worst passions and the most execrable vices mingled*

CONTENTS.

and exercised in the divine government—Opinions of the philosophers—Learned reveries—Sophistical contentions—The popular and philosophical creed equally corrupt.—Sect. 11. The divine administration according to the faith of the Hindu—Levity, licence, or malignity of the interposition of the gods—Effect on the character and belief of men.—Sect. 111. Views of the divine economy opened by the Koran—Perversions—The celestial ministers Azrael, Israfil, and Gabriel—Wild and extravagant agency—The wrath and favour of God subservient to the will of Mahomet—Consequences.—Sect. 1v. Miraculous and ordinary Providence of the Gospel—The Jew, the Gentile, and the Christian, equally recognised in the divine government—Probation salutary—The hope of all good men encouraged—Perfect correspondence, as far as we can judge, of the designs and operations with the attributes of God—Inference - - - - - p. 67

CHAP. IV.

CONSOLATION.

Sect. 1. The consolation afforded by any religion a test of its truth—Little consolation to be derived from the Greek and Roman mythology—No certain confidence—No authenticated hope—All life an evil—Suicide the remedy—The sage of Epicurus and Zeno—Tusculan disputations—Hopeless sorrow the refutation of dogmatical sophistry.—Sect. 11. Consolations of the Hindu—His gods capricious—His priests despotic—His futurity alarming and repulsive—Suicide, at last, substituted for patience and resignation.—Sect. 111. The Mussulman—Celestial favour the sure reward of his prowess or his fanaticism—His paradise—His predestinated security—Moral effects.—Sect. 1v. The Gospel a religion throughout of sympathy and compassion—Nature and object of trial—Consolations to be derived from the consideration of the divine character—Even the guilty invited to partake of the favour of God—Beautiful examples of forgiveness and acceptance—Hope and trust animated by views of hereafter—General tendency of the whole doctrine - - - - - p. 107

CHAP. V.

DEVOTION.

Sect. 1. Spirit of Greek and Roman devotion—Minute, impure, and sanguinary observances—Magic—Evocation—External forms more important than motive—The service prescribed political or

CONTENTS.

mischievous.—Sect. II. *The worship of the Hindu—Little spirituality—Innumerable forms—Human oblations—Penance and abstractions—Holy libertinism—Dancing girls—The scandal of the worship—The degradation of the worshipper.*—Sect. III. *Occasional spirituality of the worship required by the Koran—Frequent fanaticism and presumption—The blood of the infidel the most acceptable offering—Idle, contemptible, or pernicious forms—Consequent degradation of the religious and social character of the Mussulman.*—Sect. IV. *The whole duty of man according to the Gospel—The foundation of worship laid in the heart of the worshipper—Sorrow and suffering especially invited to the altar—Admirable directions for prayer—The piety promotive of the morals, and the morals essential to the piety of the Christian—Concluding views* - - - - - p. 149

CHAP. VI.

RELIGIOUS RITES AND INSTITUTIONS.

Sect. I. *Religious observances of the Greeks and Romans—The rites of Bacchus—The Lupercalia—The Corinthian Venus—The priesthood—Political, not moral, utility of all.*—Sect. II. *Institutions of the Hindus—The funeral pile—The obscenity and barbarity of the votaries at Juggernaut—The priestly order—The castes—Consequent subjugation and ignorance of the people.*—Sect. III. *Rites of the Koran—Fasts—Pilgrimages—Priests—Influence of all on the popular mind.*—Sect. IV. *The four great ordinances of the Gospel—Baptism—The Lord's supper—The Sabbath—The priesthood—The design, tendency, and effects of these institutions—Their admirable adaptation to the great purposes of Christianity* - - - - - p. 189

CHAP. VII.

MORALS AND MOTIVES.

Sect. I. *The religion of Greece not favourable to piety and virtue—The vices of the gods promotive of the vices of the people—Privileged depravity—Opinion of Hume—Zeno—Epicurus—The Academy, its omens, oracles, divination, scepticism, and superstition—General view of the moral science of Greece and Italy.*—Sect. II. *Beautiful precepts of Hindu morals—The precept contradicted by the spirit and temper of the religion—The apathy of abstraction preferred to the works of virtue—Morality lost in superstition—Results.*—Sect. III. *The precepts of the Koran adapted to the*

CONTENTS.

policy or the sensuality of their author—Cruelty, vengeance, and persecution, sanctioned by divine authority.—Sect. IV. The preceptive character of the Gospel—The moral influence of all its institutions—The views which it opens of the divine nature, and the faith and hope which it demands and excites, eminently favourable to all virtue—Precepts—The love of man a test of the love of God—Charity—All violence and revenge interdicted—Internal purity to be added to external obedience—The temper favoured by the world to be resisted—The virtues rejected by the world to be cherished—The motives encouraged by the world to be renounced—Review - - - - - p. 251

CHAP. VIII.

INSTRUCTION OF THE POOR.

Sects. I. II. III. No provision made for the instruction of the poor by the Greek, the Roman, the Hindu, and the Mahometan religions—Effects of the popular creed, and of the Eleusinian mysteries of Greece, on the mass of the people—The unallerable incapacity of the Hindu for moral instruction, according to the theory of the Brahminical priesthood—The fatalism, fanaticism, and consequent ignorance of the Mussulman.—Sect. IV. The instructions of Christ principally tendered to the poor—No compromise with the mighty, no rejection of the humble—The precept communicated to babes and sucklings, which had been hidden from the prudent and the wise—The affection of the populace conciliated by the earnest benevolence with which they were taught—No legislator deserving of the title of the friend, the guide, and the instructor of the inferior orders of mankind, save the Legislator of the Gospel - - - - - p. 316

CHAP. IX.

DOMESTIC AND FEMALE MANNERS.

Sect. I. The manners permitted or sanctioned by the mythology of Greece and Rome—Homer's goddesses—The condition of the female sex in Greece, at a subsequent period—Their education, seclusion, and oppression—The suspicion and tyranny which they endured before and after marriage—The reign of courtezans—Women of Sparta—Auxiliary husbands for the good of the state—The athletic exercises of the sex—The naked dance—The open

CONTENTS.

robe—Facility of divorce—Inference on general manners and on literature—Juvenal, Horace, Sallust, Euripides—Plautus, Terence, Aristophanes, Martial.—Sect. II. Hindu polygamy—Easy repudiation of the wife—Domestic habits—Women in a state of perpetual tutelage—Prohibited from reading the Vedas—Rules for their guidance—Punishment for their transgressions—No material change in their manners from the earliest to the present times.—Sect. III. Almost unlimited polygamy or concubinage authorized by the Koran—Repudiation—Exclusion of women from the paradise of Mahomet—Effect of the degradation of the sex on society.—Sect. IV. Equal and salutary laws for the government of the two sexes, under the Gospel—The husband and wife subject to the same rule, and bound by the same obligation—No domestic slavery nor despotism—Women restored to their proper rank in society—Public and private manners proportionally advanced

p. 352

CHAP. X.

FUTURE STATE.

Sect. I. Details of the poets—Homer—His Shades—Their character and enjoyments—Virgil—Hell—Terrific punishments—Elysium—Earthly passions and desires—Imperfect reward—Moral estimate—Opinions of the philosophers—Pythagoras—Plato—Socrates—General scepticism of the learned avowed and diffused.—Sect. II. Future recompence and retribution of the Hindus—Transmigration of gods and men—The Baghat-Geeta—The Shasta—The doctrines of both incredible, repulsive, or absurd.—Sect. III. Final decree as described in the Koran—The day of judgment—The trial—The tribunal—The Bridge Sirat—The wicked chained to devils—Voluptuous paradise of the good—Virgil and Mahomet—Truth equally violated by both—An ancient superstition embellished by the one—Fanaticism and valour and obedience confirmed by the other.—Sect. IV. The unvarying justice of the future allotments of the Gospel—The sinner—The tribunal before which he is to be tried—Circumstances of his trial—Equity of his punishment—The upright—Magnificent, though general declaration of the felicity that awaits them—More minute and less ambiguous views afforded of the happiness of heaven—Undisturbed repose—Celestial association—Progressive improvement—Accomplishment of faith and hope by vision and enjoyment—Recapitulation - - - - -

p. 413

CONTENTS.

CHAP. XI.

EXPIATION—ATONEMENT.

Sects. I. II. III. *Expiation and atonement of the Greeks—Sacrifices—Oblations—Human victims—Lustrations—Vanity and corruption of the service—The Hindu—His penances and pilgrimages—His minute and formal observances—His four redeeming probations—Results—The redemption of the Mussulman—Supererogatory merits—The blood of the infidel—Prayers, fasts, pilgrimages, ablutions, penance—The ritual insulting to God, pernicious to man.*—Sect. IV. *Christian atonement—The law and its sacrifices necessary but inadequate—The character of Christ not merely that of an inspired teacher—The redeeming efficacy of his sufferings—The mystery of the sacrifice no objection—Repentance not salvation—Three lights in which redemption may be viewed, and understood—Consolatory to the upright—Admonitory to the upright—Edifying to all* - - - - - p. 493

CHAP. XII.

FOUNDERS AND TEACHERS OF RELIGION.

Sects. I. II. III. *Founders and teachers of the religion of Greece, Italy, India and Arabia—Their defects as public instructors, and the inutility or mischief of their example.*—Sect. IV. *The Legislator of the Gospel—Sublimity of his motives—Excellence of his life—Wisdom of his teaching—His modes of address—His parables—His impartiality, authority, patience, meekness, and forbearance—Evidences thus afforded of a divine mission, and a divine character* - - - - - p. 561

CHAP. XIII.

CONCLUSION.

Evidences, according to Rousseau, of an inspired religion—The principles he lays down adopted in the present Work—Recapitulation of the preceding Chapters—Objection to the pretended failure of the Gospel—Answer—Conclusion - - - - - p. 619

THE Author entreats the Reader will refer to, and forgive,
the following

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References A. and B. pp. 4 and 10. repeated instead of C. D. pp. 26 and 27.

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VINDICIÆ CHRISTIANÆ.

CHAPTER I.

PREFATORY VIEW.

Sceptics—The nature, the object, and the value of their discussions—Their principal objection to the credibility of the gospel—The sufficiency which they attribute to unassisted reason—The plan of the following work—Systems, theories, and controversy, rejected—The advice of Boyle—Authors consulted—Aid derived from their writings—Leland and White—How far their views adequate or useful—Conclusion.

IT has been the fate of the Gospel, in every age since its promulgation, to be misrepresented and maligned ; and, in the present age, its opponents, if not numerous and learned, are, at least, sufficiently bold and persevering in their hostility. They have recourse, as far as their talents permit, to every mode of argument, and every species of objection, which they think most likely to gain proselytes to their cause. The sarcastic sneer, the sophistic subtilty, the plausible perversion of truth and fact, the sly, the laboured, and the artful comment, are all employed, with unabating industry, to accomplish the purpose of these self-constituted reformers ; and the efforts which have been thus made, have not wholly failed

to seduce the ignorant or unwary from the creed, which, through so many centuries, has been thought to promote the edification of mankind, and has been adopted alike by the zeal of the martyr, and the wisdom of the sage.

As men are often more tenacious of error than zealous for truth, and tenacious in proportion as the error is pernicious and absurd, they who are engaged in this warfare of infidelity, persevere in their labours with a vanity and an obstinacy worthy of their cause and of their sect*. In their own estimate, they alone are the philosophers, whose opinions deserve to be embraced by mankind. Yet, however bold and arrogant their pretence, they are indebted, for whatever name they may have acquired, to the objections which they have pilfered from the funds of antient scepticism; and they have done little more than given a new form to the sophistries of their predecessors, and varied, in terms, the fallacies and misrepresentations, which, advanced many centuries ago by the fathers of the school, have been since, on innumerable occasions, detected and exposed by the advocates of truth.

In the cause which these men so strenuously maintain, they think it not enough to employ every means of bold denial and authoritative assumption. While they themselves pretend to the monopoly of genius and of erudition, they toil to disparage the learning of their opponents, talk of monks with more than the spirit of a monk, and pursue with inquisitorial malignity, those whom they arraign as persecutors and inquisitors. But with what justice the enemies of the

* The imputation is admitted by the candour of Bayle. Dict. Art. des Barreaux.

Gospel thus crown themselves with the garlands of self-applause, and thus stigmatise those who labour to arrest the plague of infidelity, it is not difficult to ascertain. Was Shaftsbury, whose politeness and elegance have been so much extolled, more liberal or learned than Tillotson or than Barrow? Did the unwearied Voltaire, in whose page are mingled so many sophistries and gibes, display a more charitable and generous spirit, than the simple, modest, and accomplished Fenelon? Was Gibbon, who enjoyed so much the luxury of a sneer, more serviceable to mankind than Boyle or Locke? Or can it be said of the cool, the paradoxical, and the sceptical Hume, that he cherished less of the spirit of a sectary, even at the moment when sectaries were the objects of his contempt*, than the classical and polished Hurd, the mild and venerable Porteus, or the learned, the liberal, and the laborious Newcome?

If we look from the bitterness and vanity of these persons to their toils and their talents, we shall scarcely permit ourselves to prize them more highly. They multiply their volumes, indeed, with a zeal and perseverance not often surpassed in a better cause; yet, after all, what advantage do we derive from their infidel disquisitions? By what additional arguments have they confirmed or illustrated the genuine precepts of piety and of virtue! Or what good, intellectual or moral, has resulted from those sullen and unholy labours in which they are en-

* In note I, On the Essay on National Character, Hume has spoken of the clergy with a spirit of vituperation, equally unworthy of the philosopher and the man. According to him, they are stained with the worst vices; and the spirit of their corps is little more than a vile compound of ambition, pride, insolence, rancour, and revenge.

gaged, and which, if prosecuted with success, would be fatal to the genuine welfare and happiness of mankind!

Some benefit, however, has resulted from the efforts of these hardy speculators. The zeal of infidelity seldom fails to promote the energy of resistance and of defence. The Gospel, accordingly, if it has been misrepresented by its enemies, has been vindicated by its friends; and it may be almost said, that the Christian Religion is as much indebted to the scepticism which provoked the reply, as to the victorious learning by which the reply has been produced.

But the sceptic, though refuted, is not repelled. Disdaining to confine his discussions to a few topics, he talks of various readings*, contradictory doctrines, false philosophy, idle fables, and impossible miracles, with exulting flippancy and tenacious dogmatism; and, at once, meriting and despising the reproach of the illustrious Euler, he indulges his contumely, and wastes his animadversions, on subjects incomparably more elevated and sublime than those which have baffled the patient industry of the most powerful and sagacious minds†. If, in this chivalry of sceptical warfare, he experience defeat,

* Appendix, note A.

† Euler, in combating an error of Newton, expresses himself in a manner which might convey some useful instruction to the credulous incredulity of the sceptical philosopher. "Tous les jours que je vois de ces esprits-forts, qui critique les vérités de notre religion, et s'en moquent meme avec la plus impertinente suffisance, je pense, chétifs mortels, combien et combien des choses sur lesquelles vous raisonnez si legerement, sont elles plus sublimes, et plus élevés, que celles sur lesquelles le grand Newton s'égare si grossierement."

his vanity and his zeal speedily renew the combat ; and, however pressed by learning and by truth, he continues, with unyielding pertinacity, to affect the pride, the port, and the pomp of triumph.

On one question of paramount importance, he particularly exercises his subtilty and his strength. Anxious not only to lop the branches, but to lay his axe at once to the root of, the tree, he maintains a proposition, which, if true, would be quite sufficient for his purpose ; and boldly and unhesitatingly affirms that Revelation is incredible, because unnecessary ; and unnecessary, because the reason of man is sufficient for the discovery of every duty which he owes to his Maker, to mankind, and to himself.

On the presumption that the Almighty lavishes not his attributes in useless or uncalled for miracles, and that, what man is enabled to discover for himself, will scarcely be disclosed by the interposition of heaven, he presses this argument with a confidence or a temerity not easily to be repressed. But what is that reason which, by its unassisted strength, is to accomplish so sublime and salutary a purpose ? Is it a thing utterly abstracted from the influences of corrupt passions, and a perverse will ? Is it governed only by a love of wisdom and of truth ? Is it never disturbed in its serenity, and never warped in its judgments, by the views, the claims, and the interests of the world ? If so, let the sceptic consult and applaud it as a teacher and a guide. But if, on the contrary, it be perpetually liable to perversion from evil propensities within, and evil impulses without ; we may be less inclined to admit that it is sufficient to supersede the necessity of a revelation, and to construct a religion, which, in the perfect purity of its

morals and motives, might justly claim the respect and acceptance of mankind.

Let it be recollected that there may be something more required in religion, than a mere system of moral and devotional wisdom. Vicarious atonement, the intercession of a mediator, the certainty and the nature of a future state, the character and economy of a ruling Providence, and the operation of grace for the aid and illumination of human infirmity, may be subjects of great and paramount importance. Yet, on these topics, unassisted reason, in its highest perfection, has little to communicate; and we look to it in vain for light and guidance, where both may be most required by the feebleness and the necessities of man.

The religion of reason, a religion merely human, would be also defective in its sanctions and its authority. Men are imperfectly to be controuled by the law which they believe to be only the injunction of a being frail and feeble as themselves. The law, to be efficient, must be authoritatively pronounced, by a lawgiver invested with authoritative power. Obedience will be easily deflected from its course, where the means to enforce it are incompetent and weak; and prohibition will be feeble in direct proportion to the facility with which it may be evaded. The priest and the statesman, who, prior to the æra of the gospel, undertook to controul by laws the perversity of the multitude, have uniformly appealed to sanctions more powerful than the authority of human wisdom. They heard, in the solitude of their mountains and their woods, the sacred voice of a divine instructor; and the cavern and the desert witnessed their holy colloquies with beings of heaven. In this

PREFATORY VIEW.

manner they endeavoured to enforce their institutions by pious pretences to the auxiliary inspiration of the gods ; and they who might have rejected with contempt the fallacious creed of the human legislator, were to be intimidated and governed by idle tales of illumination from above.

But, after all, the candid inquirer will not rest his reply to the objection of the sceptic, on suggestions like these. Admitting the appeal which the objection virtually includes to experience and to fact, he will endeavour to estimate the asserted competence of unassisted reason, by the lights which unassisted reason has hitherto afforded for the regulation of the morals and motives of men. He will, therefore, advert to the respective religions of the Greek, the Roman, the Hindu, and the Mahometan, that is, the most distinguished systems of religious polity which human wisdom has ever been able to devise ; and, comparing them, in their genius and their influence, with the genius and influence of the Gospel, he will endeavour to ascertain how far the necessity of an inspired religion may be inferred from the defects of the first, and how far the reality, from the nature and excellence of the last.

In the progress of this investigation, he will be studious to extend his view to all the great and essential topics of piety and of morality. Among these, the communications of the religions which he compares, on the subject of the being and the attributes of God—of the economy of Providence—of the worship due to the divine nature—of the laws and obligations of piety and morals—of the consolations required under the trials and calamities of life—of religious observances and institutions—of the immortality of the soul—of a future state of reward

and punishment—and of the nature and necessity of the atonement required for the sins of man—will be each subjected to his revision and scrutiny; and the truth and falsehood, and the mischievous or salutary tendency of all, discussed with patient, distinct, and dispassionate impartiality.

But he will not confine his inquiry to the precepts, the doctrines, and the institutions, which he may be thus required to examine. He will recollect that, if the Deity have been pleased to select any persons, at any time, for the communication of his laws to mankind, those persons will be impressed with especial marks of their divine vocation, and exhibit, in their wisdom and their virtues, the evidences of their adaptation to the purposes of heaven. He will, therefore, candidly and calmly advert to the founders of the religions which he reviews; and he will consider the character of their lives, and of their moral and intellectual qualities, as a further criterion by which the claims of their respective systems may be rejected or sustained.

In this manner, then, I have here considered the infidel objection to the necessity and credibility of the Gospel. Nor let it be affirmed, that I have uncandidly selected, for the purpose of comparison, the four great religions which have prevailed in the East and in the West. Those religions were framed and published under the most favourable circumstances, and were the product, in various ages, of minds, equal or superior, in genius and sagacity, to the most distinguished philosophers of modern times. The Greek, the Hindu, and the Roman Polytheism, were the boast and the reverence of the most polished and cultivated nations; the Koran was the work of a man, whose admitted talents were aided

by his intimacy with the Jewish and Christian scriptures ; and on the Koran and on the Polytheism, poets, legislators, and statesmen, have repeatedly lavished the vindication of argument, the illumination of comment, and the zeal of eulogy.

The “ elegant mythology” of the Greeks and Romans has not been denied the applause of the “ Historian of the Roman Empire,” and his taste and genius have thrown a veil over its defects. The Pere Thomassin has toiled in the same service, and collected, in his Lectures on the Poets, every testimony which erudition could supply, of the excellence and beauty of that singular system. The absurdities which could not endure a literal interpretation, were converted, by the learned ingenuity of Dacier, and of others of the same school, into profound and philosophical allegories. Our own Cudworth, whose penetration could explore the darkest recesses of religious metaphysics, has discovered various perfections in the same mass of mythological fable. The erudite mysticism of Ramsay has pursued a similar course, and detected, in the multiplicity of heathen deities, a celestial triad of wisdom, of goodness, and of power. The subtle and reflecting Hume, while he rejected the Gospel, has admitted the probability of a religion of twenty thousand gods *. And even the plain and not unlearned Spence seems willing to deny the polytheism of the Greek mythology ; and, while he asserts the

* “ The whole mythological system (of Greece) is so natural, that, in the variety of planets and worlds contained in this universe, it seems more than probable that some where or other it is really carried into execution. Hist. of Rel. sect. xi. Hume was not often to be intimidated by the hazard of adventurous speculation.

supreme or sole divinity of the polyonymous Jupiter, he degrades the rest of the deities into subordinate and ministring deputies of his providence and of his power.

The religions of the Bramin and of the Mahometan have not been denied their portions of favour and applause. The first was embraced and adopted by the zeal of Egypt, and the taste and elegance of Greece*, and has been defended, in modern times, by the report of the historian and the commentary of the critic†. Of the Koran the justification has been equally ardent and eloquent. The enthusiasm and fancy of Boulenvilier, the erudition and pertinacity of Sale, and, occasionally, the ingenuity and refinement of Gannier, have celebrated the wisdom and sagacity of Mahomet, with almost the zeal and the talent of the orthodox Abúlfeda; and, if assent were to be proportioned to the fervor or the temerity with which these writers and others of the same class, have extolled the Sura of the angelic Gabriel, the institution of Islam would not be thought unworthy of the celestial origin to which it is ascribed.

In contrasting these religions with the Gospel, I have placed no reliance on theories and systems; and I have regarded with suspicion the ingenuity of fanciful or enthusiastic commentators, which is exercised as often for the maintenance of an ambiguous dogma, as for the illustration or diffusion of truth. No mystic reverie, therefore, will be found to darken

* Sir William Jones, on the gods of Asia, of Egypt, and of Greece.

† Dow, Holwell, and others of their school, have displayed perseverance and talent in their report of the antiquity and excellence of the Braminical religion. See Appendix, note B.

these pages. The dreams of rabbi of every school are equally disclaimed; and the creeds surveyed, instead of being sought for in the doubtful glosses of theologians, are deduced only from their origin in the doctrines of their founders.

Nor have I ever intentionally devoted my page to sects or sectaries. The discussion of polemic subtleties, which has contributed to divide the Christian world into so many schisms, was as little consistent with my inclination as with my design. Instead of entering, then, into the arena of combat, and labouring for the maintenance or justification of mysterious or ambiguous dogmas, I have sought only to resolve a question interesting to every professor and every opponent of the Gospel; and, following the path marked out by the wisdom of Boyle, I have endeavoured to sustain the evidence of "the necessity and the divine origin of the Christian dispensation, without descending to the controversies which exist among Christians themselves." *

Though I have not been anticipated, as I believe, in the plan of my work, I have yet received assistance from preceding writers which I would neither disparage nor deny. By some of them, the obstructions, which might otherwise have retarded my progress have been, in several instances, diminished or removed; and some of them I have followed, as far as they led, with that deference which is due to superior talents, and that respect which is merited by useful, honourable, and successful diligence.

Among these, I have been indebted to Leland for

* Mr. Boyle directs, that the lectures founded by his will, should be conducted in this manner. Codicil to Boyle's will, July 18, 1691.

occasional aid. He has discussed the "Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation," with much patience and erudition. His plan, indeed, did not permit him to take an ample or a satisfactory view of the subject; and he has been condemned, perhaps justly, by the critic, for the wearisome minuteness of his details, the ostentatious quotation and needless prolixity with which he has bloated his work, the tedious, sluggish, and yet imperfect expansion of his argument, and the very defective statement which he affords of the internal evidences of the Christian Religion*. But he is prudent, circumspect, and learned, careless to amuse, anxious to convince, contemptuous of subtilty and of paradox; and laborious to adduce whatever proofs might be gleaned from the volumes of antiquity, for the confirmation of his opinions. The testimony which he produces, of the wild and wanton absurdity of the Greek mythology, is cogent and convincing. He leads us into the interior of the temple of Polytheism; and discloses the polluted altars, the monstrous worship, and the disgusting or ludicrous institutions of Paganism; and his whole discussion, though too much limited in its topics for the inference which he is anxious to deduce, and sometimes too much dilated in its wordiness for the patience of his reader, is

* He almost wholly devotes two quarto volumes, including nearly one thousand pages, to the discussion of the errors and absurdities of the polytheism of the Greeks; and yet the discussion is limited, in a great degree, to three topics, "the knowledge and worship of the one true God, the rule of moral duty, and the state of future reward and punishment," as they are disclosed or announced by the religion of Greece. The internal evidence of the gospel occupies, comparatively, but a few pages of the work, and is very imperfectly deduced.

conducted with a candour and a perseverance not unworthy of the high and important subject on which he meditates.

But I am more proud to acknowledge myself a debtor, in one branch of my work, to Professor White. He brought, to his Bampton Lectures, very eminent powers of genius and erudition. His inquiry may be limited and his topic confined*. But his eloquence, rapid yet prudent, and figurative and magnificent, yet luminous and clear, admirably adapts itself to his subject, and brightens and vivifies his whole discussion. If he examine, scrutinize, and resolve the questions which present themselves to his consideration, it is with the precision of Aristotle and the fervor of Plato. The dignity of truth is vindicated in his page, with the spirit and energy of ardent but temperate zeal. As far as his plan might permit, he expatiates, in a manner which at once penetrates the heart, and satisfies the understanding, on the pre-eminent excellence of the Christian dispensation; and he fearlessly exposes the recesses of Islamism and the heart of Mahomet, and drags to light, and exhibits in all their native deformity, the monstrous progeny engendered by the disgusting union of unprincipled ambition and religious fraud.

By such writers as these I have been, sometimes,

* His sole or principal object is to detail the causes which accelerated the establishment and diffusion of the religion of Mahomet, and obstructed and retarded the progress of the dispensation of Christ. I am sorry to say I did not see the work of Doctor Ireland on the Paganism of Greece, nor the lectures of Doctor W. B. Collyer, till it was too late to avail myself of the light and learning which distinguish both. It may be permitted me, perhaps, to add, that the plan adopted by those writers, interferes, in no degree, with the design of the present work.

assisted in my inquiries. If I have entered into the field, a portion of which bears the traces of their toils, I have done so but as a fellow labourer, anxious to forward the great work which they have so sedulously prosecuted and advanced. If I have succeeded in uniting the lights which they have separately kindled, or been able to extend their views to a more ample or more useful comprehension of the subject, I shall, at best, but have merited the name of a disciple, instructed in their school, and aided by their diligence, and zealous to erect, on the foundation laid by their hands, an humble monument to the truth, the excellence, and the inspiration of the religion of the Gospel.

I now dismiss my work with the mingled consciousness of good motive, and great deficiency. To the subject which I have discussed, I brought, at least, diligence, humility, and zeal; and the sentiment which animated the labours of the learned and excellent Potter, has accompanied me through my inquiry, and abides with me at its close.—*Per me licet, alii laureas captent ex criticâ, ex historiâ, ex philosophiâ, cæterisque artibus. Mihi sane videbor summum attigisse culmen, si quid ad ecclesiæ Christianæ decus, tenue hoc ingenium conferre unquam poterit* *.

* Potter. Lycophron. Ed. Secund. Pref.

CHAPTER II.

THE BEING AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

SECT. I.

The being and attributes of the gods of Greece and Italy—Prevailing ignorance of all the Nations of antiquity, except the Jews, on the subject of the Divine Nature—The zeal of faith proportioned to the absurdity of the creed—The mythology of the Greeks and Romans not more perfect, in a religious view, than that of the most barbarous people—Occasionally elegant and poetical in its classifications—Instances—Unbounded, whimsical, and corrupt in its polytheism—The vilest qualities and vices deified—Celestial discords and crimes—The Deities even of the highest class vitious and contemptible—Pernicious example—The mingled levity and reverence of popular belief—Ludicrous impiety of the stage—The doctrine of the schools—Zeno, Epicurus, Plato—Learned extravagance and contention—The people despised by the philosophers, the philosophers by the people—Both equally ignorant—The ignorance of the people preferable to that of the philosophers.

THE history of man, however calculated, in its general details, to familiarize the reader with calamity and crime, and, therefore, to diminish the influence of humanity and virtue, has exhibited nothing, perhaps, more humiliating or more afflicting, than those institutions of religion, by which the greater portion of the antient world was degraded and enslaved. The diversified chart of the faith of nations seems to have been framed only to demonstrate the unskilfulness and incompetency of its authors, and to misguide credulity in the voyage of life. It is not among the barbarous and ignorant alone, that we

trace the most perverse and irrational ideas of Divinity. On this subject, as on most other topics of religion, the darkness is almost as universal as profound; and is mitigated but by a casual or solitary beam from the rare wisdom of a Socrates or a Confucius. The worship and worshipper appear to be worthy of each other; and the continued and stupid superstition of ages and of realms, affords an instructive lesson to the arrogance and self-sufficiency of the wisdom of this world*.

We see, indeed, that there has been no religion too gross for the credulity and reverence of man. They who composed and asserted the creed, seem to have proceeded on the persuasion, that the greater the absurdity, the greater would be the influence of the popular religion†. It is not merely the sublime and beautiful forms of nature, the sun pouring its vivifying beams over the earth, the moon cheering with its radiance the darkness of night, or the mighty ocean spreading abroad its restless and interminable waters, that have been deified by the adoration of individuals, or of nations. The most ludicrous and most disgusting objects, which the weakness of ignorance, or the wildness of fancy or of fear, could metamorphose into gods, have enjoyed

* "De qua" (nempe de naturâ Deorum) "tam variæ sunt doctissimorum hominum, tamque discrepantes sententiæ." Cicero de Nat. Deor. lib. i. § 1.

† "The baser the materials are of which the Divinity is composed, the greater devotion is he likely to excite in the breast of his deluded votaries. They exult in their shame, and make a merit with their deity in braving, for his sake, all the ridicule and contumely of his enemies." Hume, Nat. Hist. of Religion. The opinion of the philosopher, perhaps, might be verified by the experience even of modern times.

their altars, their worship, and their oblations. Scarcely was a single people preserved from this degrading superstition; the torrent of idolatry rolled widely and irresistibly along; and, if one scanty race was saved in the general inundation, and conducted amid the waters to an Ararat of repose, the exception was not due to the piety and virtue of the race itself, but to the directing wisdom of a beneficent Providence.

Were Greece and Italy more refined in their faith; and was their worship addressed to higher and nobler objects?—We hasten to inquire.

In the happier ages of those illustrious nations, freedom, science, and the arts, united to illuminate the minds of men; and the Athenian and the Roman exhibited to the rest of the world, a proud example of all that was sublime in genius, and accomplished in taste. It was not the individual only that was refined. A fruit woman at Athens could correct the accent of the learned and polished Theopompus; and the tuneful modulation of an oratorical sentence could be appreciated and applauded by the judgment of the Roman populace*.

The mythology of such a people, we should expect, would not be unworthy of such attainments; and, certainly, it is, in many respects, as “elegant” as it is fanciful. Within its mighty Pantheon we discover the most graceful and interesting divinities. It has abundantly enriched the pages of the poet, and placed over almost every department of nature, some god beautiful in form, and benevolent and amiable in at-

* When Carbo, in haranguing the people, pronounced the following sentence,—“*patris dictum sapiens, temeritas filii comprobavit*,”—the applause, says Cicero, which followed a close so harmonious, was loud and general.

tribute. Does the blossom delight with its fragrance or its bloom? Aurora has nourished it with her tears, and Zephyr has expanded it with his breath. Do the waters fret and babble among the rocks, or flow smoothly and gently through the windings of the valley? Some Naid sports with the current, and dances along the banks. Does the grape cluster on the vine, the harvest ripen into gold, or the orchard bend beneath its fruit? It is to the benignity of Bacchus, of Ceres, or of Pomona, that the wants of men are indebted for the increase and for the blessing. The shepherd tunes not his reed beneath the shade, the poet meditates not his song to love and beauty, without being favoured and inspired by some auspicious power; and Pan, Diana, Venus, or the Muses, are perpetually beheld sporting with and blessing their favoured votaries. Even death itself, divested of his terrors, appears in the form of a Cupid with an inverted torch. The very lights of heaven are but the radiances of celestial natures. The sun is a god, who, seated in a chariot of fire, and borne along by the swiftness of immortal steeds, daily circles the immensity of the world, and pours light and joy over the universe; and the moon, presiding with more gentle sway over the night, supplies the absence of her brother, and cheers, with her tempered beams, the earth and the heavens. The scene of ocean has no less its appropriate rulers. In its courts and palaces of coral, Thetis, surrounded by nymphs of celestial bloom, celebrates her mysterious revels, and prepares the nightly couch for the wearied Apollo. Amid its blue and undulating waters, the long-haired Triton floats in his car of pearl, and directs his attendants to guide some favoured bark from the whirlpool or the rock; or, if the mighty element be

caught by the tempest, and rage and foam against the shores, it is the wrath of Neptune that swells and tosses the waves, as it is his benignity that shall silence their uproar, and hush them into peace*. Over all, from the depths of Erebus to the expanse of heaven, Jupiter, the sire of gods and men, exercises his paternal or controuling power. He grasps the thunder in his anger; sends forth the lightnings and commissions the storms to do his will; and shakes by his nod the foundations of the universe; but, when he smiles, all nature is vivified and cheered, and the inhabitants of earth and heaven, blessed by the celestial influence, acknowledge and adore the beneficence of their ruler.

The priest, the allegorist, and the poet, while they equally indulged in these interesting and expressive combinations, might hope to kindle the enthusiasm, or animate the piety of the credulous multitude; and the barbarity of popular life and manners might be refined by the elegance of fables, thus fabricated in the recesses, and sanctified by the solemn and imposing authority, of religion.

But the framers of Grecian Polytheism have not limited their fancy to creations of this character. With an absurd and pernicious prodigality, they lavished celestial attributes on the most insignificant or worthless objects. Natural causes and material forms were converted into gods, There was scarcely a want, a wish, a whim, a prejudice, a vice, or virtue, of man, which did not possess its presiding divinity. The very animal functions of

* Homer. Il. v. v. 18. 27. Longinus has justly extolled the passage, and Pope has infused into his translation the spirit of the original.

human nature were to be performed under the aid, or in the presence, of some peculiar power; and twenty thousand deities, the easy creation of fear and hope, were scarcely deemed sufficient for the hierarchy of heaven.

Of these deities, so numerous that it was said to be easier to find a god than a man*, and so framed as to correspond with the necessities of fragile and afflicted mortality†, it was, sometimes, conceived, that they might be insulted with impunity and seduced by bribes. If a town was to be besieged, the Romans solemnly invoked the tutelary deity of the place, and endeavoured to win him from the enemy, by the promise of more costly offerings than he had been accustomed to receive‡. At the same time, they who thus tempted the gods of their opponents, attributed similar treachery or mutability to their own; and the name of the protecting divinity of Rome was studiously concealed, lest the foes of the republic should be able to allure him by similar offerings to similar desertion.

One people worshipped the stones on which they trod; another annually assembled to expel with tumult and violence, such alien deities as had migrated into their lands§. The Greeks and Romans despised the credulity of this miserable superstition;

* *Nostra regio tam presentibus plena est numinibus, ut facilius possis deum quam hominem invenire.* Petron. Sat. p. 35.

† *Fragilis et laboriosa mortalitas in partes ista digessit, ut portionibus quisquis coleret, quo maxime indigeret.* Pliny, lib. iii. c. 7.

‡ Valer. Maximus, cited by Pliny, lib. xxvii. c. 2. The form of invocation was long preserved in the ritual of the Pontiff.

§ Herodian. lib. v. Quint. Curt. lib. iv. c. 7.

yet, while they themselves chained their gods to pedestals lest they should flee away; while they banished the citizen who affirmed that the statues of the temples were not divinities, but the work of the sculptor*; while they fancied with the poet, “that many evils were inflicted by the gods on men, but many also by men upon the gods”†; while they erected temples to the goddess of fever, to Evil Fortune, to Orbilia, the destroyer of children, to fear, the last and meanest of the passions, and to the frontless audacity of contumacy and of insolence‡; while they armed the Furies with the torch and the scourge, to exercise on earth the malignities of hell,§ and permitted the squalid and offensive Mephitis herself to share in the government of the

* Plutarch. *De Isid. et Osir.* Oper. tom. ii. p. 397. The philosopher Stilpho, having affirmed that the statue of Minerva was not a god, was banished from Athens by a decree of the Areopagus. *Diog. Laert.* lib. ii. segm. 116.

† Dione, in the *Iliad*, addresses this language to Venus, after the goddess had been wounded by Diomedes.

‡ Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* lib. iii. c. 25. Valer. Maximus, lib. ii. c. 5. Plin. *Nat. Hist.* lib. xi. c. 7. Fear had many Temples, and was worshipped even at Sparta. Plut. *In Cleomen.* et in *Thea.* Cicero, *De Leg.* lib. ii. and Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* lib. ii. c. 7, admit the deification of impudence and contumacy.

§ Virgil is never more sublime than when he describes the powers and operations of his gods; but, perhaps, the figure of Alecto, in the seventh *Æneid*, is the grandest and boldest painting of that inimitable poet.

Luctificam Alecti dirarum ab sede sororum
Infernisque ciet tenebris: cui tristia bella,
Iræque, insidiæque, et crimina noxia cordi.
Odit et ipse pater Pluton, odère sorores
Tartaræ monstrum; tot sese vertit in ora,
Tam sevæ facies, tot pululat atra colubris.

Æn. lib. vii. 324.

world, and to claim the consecrated honours of the altar and of the oblation*; the credulity of the wildest or most stupid polytheist will be thought to have been equalled, or surpassed, by that of nations, contemptuously vain of their science and their taste, and proudly boastful of the pre-eminent purity and wisdom of their religion.

Through the whole of this strange system, we discover examples of celestial crime and celestial discord, which could not but have been injurious to the piety and morals of men. Not only were the deities uncertain and variable in their individual character, but divided and subdivided into factions, at once hostile to each other, and to the welfare of mankind. He who preferred the power of beauty, was to incense the jealous majesty of the Queen of heaven. He who bent before the altar of Jove, was not thereby to avert the wrath of the Divinity of the deep†. Even realms and kingdoms were to suffer, like humble individuals, from the discordances of heaven. Every nation had its patrons and its foes in the synod of Olympus; and its prosperity or decline was less to be attributed to its virtues or its vices, than to celestial favour fortuitously excited, or celestial enmity unknowingly and undeservedly provoked.

* Mephitis presides over noisome and pestiferous odours. In a gloomy, close, unventilated cave, in the valley of Amsanctus, a temple was aptly erected to this filthy goddess.

† In the first book of the *Odyssey*, Jupiter, conciliated by the piety and oblations of Ulysses, wishes to accelerate the return of the hero to Ithaca. Neptune, recollecting the extinguished sight of his son Polyphemus resists; and the "cloud-assembling god" deems it necessary to call the other deities to his assistance, in order to counteract the wrath, and to limit the power, of his brother.

The great poet of Rome has exhibited the principal deities of his religion in action. We behold them gleaming amid the flames of the devoted Troy, heaving the walls of the city from their foundations, overturning the palaces of nobles and of kings, scattering in the dust the temples and altars of the gods, encouraging and delighting in the work of massacre and of havoc, and mingling in the uproar with sublime and terrific energy. But the attitudes they assume are those, not of gods or men, but of furies and demons. They are all governed by the dire malignity of one predominant and flagitious passion ; and they rush forward, with the rage of irresistible vengeance, to afflict, to ravage, and destroy*.

In their intercourse with each other, they occasionally revel, and riot, and wanton, and laugh, with little reserve of decorum, of delicacy, or of taste. But their evil passions speedily renew the dissonances of heaven. Divine in power, they are worse than human in discrepancy and discord. The whole *Iliad* is but a diversified detail of the folly or fury of their dissensions. Mars is bound by the superior strength of the *Aloïdes*, or entangled in the invisible meshes of the net of Vulcan, or chastised by the hand, and insulted by the sarcasms, of the goddess of wisdom. Vulcan is hurled headlong from the skies, by the offended majesty of his sire. Apollo is subdued by the masculine vigour of *Minerva* ; or dismissed to tend the herds of an earthly master, by the indignation of Jupiter. Juno is suspended between earth and heaven as a spectacle of terror to the rest of the divinities, and openly

• *Æneid*, lib. ii.

menaced by her offended lord with the lash. And the mighty father of gods and men is not only perpetually controuled by the dominant authority of the Fates, but insulted by the reproaches, or by the threats, of the greatest and the least of the inhabitants of heaven.

These deities are not more human in their discords, than in their wants, their desires, and their enjoyments. The scandal of low amours is their glory and their boast. Laughter, and jest, and revelry, mingle loudly and rudely in their carousals*. They frequently renounce the cares and the duties of dominion, to visit the fuming temples of the Æthiopian, and regale on the scent of the burning victims. The weariness or the waste of their ethereal frame is to be solaced or repaired by the restoring virtues of the viand and the cup. The repose of sleep is necessary to recruit the spirits which toil or gluttony might have impaired; and the affairs of nations are subjected to the misrule of the wife and sister of Jove, while the thunderer sinks into an oblivious slumber on the flowery and fragrant couch of mount Ida†.

Of the delicacy of moral sentiment the deities of Greece and Rome pretended to little, and possessed

* See the account of the Olympian feast. *Iliad*, lib. i. fere ad fin.

† Petronius rivals Homer in the description of this scene :

*Idæo qualis fudit de vertice flores
Terra parens, cum se confesso junxit amori
Jupiter ; et toto concepit pectore flammæ :
Emicuere rosæ, violæque, et molle cyperon,
Albaque de viridi riserunt lilia prato.
Talis humus Venerem molles clinavit in herbas,
Candidiorque dies secreto favit amori.*

Sat. vol. ii. p. 404.

none. Their votaries are frequently deceived into crime by their inspirations, or instructed in the contempt of virtue by their example. Creusa, the dishonoured victim of the passion of Apollo, is impelled by Minerva, and directed by an oracle, to deceive the credulity of her husband, and to impose on his kindness the child of an adulterous intercourse*. Juno forgets and sullies her high character, while she descends to deceive her imperial husband by a falsehood†, to invoke the fiends of hell to accomplish the purposes of her malice; and to prepare and accelerate the disgraces of the cave, and the destruction of Dido‡. The chastity of the meek Diana, which had been so deeply wounded by the involuntary offence of Actæon, is sacrificed in the courted embrace of the mortal Endymion; and the Ruler of the skies himself descends from Olympus, to accomplish his purpose by a fraud§, assumes the form of a serpent or a swan for the gratification of his licentiousness, or hastens to practise his vile deceptions on the wife of the absent and gallant Amphytrion||.

Of this last deity, the celestial Atlas, on whose shoulders rested the government of the universe, the priest and the poet have delineated the most inconsistent character. He was immortal, yet he was traced to the cradle of Crete. He was denominated "the greatest and the best," yet he violated almost

* See the *Ion* of Euripides. The whole tragedy is an exemplification of celestial grossness and fraud. Apollo is a seducer; Minerva a cheat; Creusa an adulteress; and Xanthus a dupe.

† *Iliad*, lib. xiv.

‡ *Æneid*, lib. iv.

§ He sends a lying dream to Agamemnon. *Iliad*.

|| Plautus details the story with great vivacity and spirit; and the poet makes sufficiently free with the god.

every law human and divine *. He was worshipped as the universal sire, yet was described as a secondary and subordinate power, inadequate to create, and impotent to controul †. He was the most excellent of beings, yet he was a libertine, a parricide, a usurper, and an adulterer. He was superior to all the gods, yet every where were temples erected to some uncle, brother, sister, or cousin, his equals in descent, and rendered his inferiors only by the crime of a successful and guilty usurpation ‡.

It will not be asserted that the mass of the people were ignorant of these frailties of their gods. Which of the Greeks was not to hear the songs of Orpheus, of Hesiod, or of Homer? Which of the Romans was not to listen to the lyre of Ovid, or of Virgil? Even on the stage, the deities were occasionally introduced in the very character with which they had been invested by the founders of the religion, sometimes to play their merry and licentious gambols for the entertainment of the multitude §, and sometimes to swell and aggrandize the scene by the exercise of malignant and capricious power ||. The inferior classes of men were to behold, in these representations, so many examples of frailty and of crime ; and

* Meziriae, Comment. sur les Epit. d'Ovide, vol. ii. p. 377.

† Homer expressly denominates Oceanus and Tethys the original parents of things ; and he and Hesiod, and almost all antiquity, ascribe to Necessity and Fate the dominion of the universe.

‡ Appendix, note A.

§ Non alii Dii ridentur in theatris quam adorantur in templis ; nec alii ludos exhibetis quam quibus immolatis. August. de Civit. Dei. lib. vi. c. 8. p. 117.

|| Æschyl. Prometh. passim. Sophocl. Œdip. et Eumenid. Euripides. Orest. The gods, as they are exhibited in these tragedies, are monsters of violence, of injustice, or of wrath.

the few who were more wise, were to discover additional grounds for the hesitation of their faith, or the incredulity of their scepticism.

The wild absurdities which were thus displayed, seem not to have diminished the reverence of the people. While the Greek permitted and extolled the strange impieties of the dramatist*, he punished the philosophical heterodoxy of Socrates with death; and while the Roman delighted in the theatrical representation of the unprincipled intrigues of his divinities †, he was singularly attentive to the rites, and singularly devoted to the most superstitious articles, of his creed. The solemnity of the belief was, in no wise, disturbed by the mockery of the representation. It was imagined that nothing was more likely, in times of public exigency and distress, to conciliate the favour and appease the wrath of the gods, than to exhibit their wanton frauds and licentious amours for popular amusement; and there is no doubt that the ludicrous and familiar, or brutal and disgusting character in which those gods were represented by the comic poet, perfectly accorded with the prevailing persuasions of the national faith ‡.

It may be now admitted that the religion of the Roman and of the Greek was equally corrupt and pernicious in its primary and essential principle, and unworthy of the adoption of the most credulous and superstitious people. To good morals it could lend no aid. To genuine piety it could afford no

* Aristophanes, with the full approbation of almost all Athens, every where makes the gods the subject of his merriment and burlesque. In *Nubib.* v. 617. In *Plut.* v. 1120. In *Ran.* pass.

† As in the *Amphytrion* of Plautus.

‡ Appendix, note B.

motive. The wantonness, the folly, and the profligacy of its gods; the more than human vices by which they were degraded; their jealousies, discords, and caprices, so base and worthless, might inspire irreverence or contempt, but could awaken no emotion of holiness, and improve no motive of virtue. Every crime, and every appetite and passion, might find its vindication in celestial example; and the faith which was not to be averted by so wild and monstrous a creed, may afford a melancholy instance of the aptitude of men to yield themselves to the frauds or fanaticism of priests, and to embrace dogmas without inquiry, which common reason and common sense would have instructed them to despise.

Yet this religion, however puerile or gross, was the work of no vulgar minds. It was framed by men who demonstrated, in other respects, superior attainments. The great masters of verse, on whom Greece and the world lavished their applause, who united in themselves the character of legislators, moralists, and bards, and who have continued, for so many centuries, to delight and instruct mankind, sent it forth to the world, dignified by their sanction, and adopted by their faith. He whose songs are said to have humanized the savage, and united the wandering herds in peaceful and orderly communities*; he who was instructed by the Muses in the genealogies of the gods, and who revealed the secrets of celestial parentage and descent†; he who conferred by his applause new glory on heroes and on kings, and immortalized in his strains the triumphs of conquerors‡; he, above all, who is said to have stolen the cæstus of Venus, and to have infused its happiest

* Orpheus.

† Hesiod.

‡ Pindar.

and most potent charms into his verse *, contributed, with other distinguished men, to its formation and establishment; and, if it have issued with such imperfections from such hands, we are not so much to consider it as a monument disgraceful to the architects by whom it was raised, as an evidence, perhaps, of the incompetence of human reason itself to frame a religion suitable to the condition and frailties of man.

If it be here asserted that, in the schools of Grecian and Roman philosophy, a better and nobler system may be found, the reply will neither be doubtful nor difficult. Among the whole tribe of the ancient philosophers, there is not one whose notions of the divine nature were not vitiated by the grossest and most extravagant errors. Absurdity and contradiction mingled with the theology, and betrayed the ignorance, of every sect. The wild fancies of the poet were equalled or surpassed by the systems in which was embodied the visionary creed of the sophist; and the doctrines neither of Socrates, of Plutarch, of Marcus Aurelius, of Aristotle, or of Plato, can be said to merit, in any degree, the honourable appellation of genuine theism †.

-
- On diroit que pour plaire, instruit par la nature,
Homere ait à Venus derobé sa ceinture ;
Son livre est d'agréments un fertile trésor ;
Tout ce qu'il a touché, se convertit en or ;
Tout reçoit dans ses mains une nouvelle grace,
Toujours il divertit, et jamais il ne laisse.

The panegyric is not in the best manner of Boileau. Perhaps, it should have been added, to complete the character of the first of poets, that he who had possessed himself of the cæstus of Venus, had also borrowed the thunders of Jupiter.

† Hume, in his Natural History of Religion, says he can scarcely allow these philosophers the appellation of genuine theists.

On three points the theological discords of the antient schools were softened into a unusual harmony.

I. All the philosophers, except those of the atheistical sects, agreed in admitting a plurality of gods. If some of them occasionally speak of Deity in the singular number, they speedily lapse into the error of the popular faith, and avow persuasions which sufficiently proves they had no conception of the unity of the Divine Being. Socrates and Plato, the best and purest of the philosophical theologians, were scarcely less devoted than the plebeian disciples of the popular creed, to the dogmas of polytheism. The sublime language in which they occasionally assert their belief in one supreme and omniscient Being, is not the result of permanent and satisfied conviction; and the page and passage which appear to be illuminated with the most noble and essential of all doctrines, are frequently darkened, before they close, by the virtual or direct admission of a rabble plurality of discordant deities*.

II. The ancient philosophers also agreed in limiting the attributes of their gods. The Deity was said neither to exercise nor possess creative energy. Matter, uncreated, eternal and self-existent, might be shaped into diversity of form by divine skill, but it existed independently of the divine power. It was thus invested with the fundamental qualities of Deity; and the inert divinity was often to resist the will and art of the plastic nature by which it might

The cold caution of the assertion, but ill agrees with that paradoxical temerity which so perpetually involves him, on other subjects, in metaphysical adventures.

* Appendix, note C.

be occasionally moulded into grace and beauty. From this doctrine of the contumacy and perversity of matter was deduced the cause of physical evil. The Deity was subdued by the supposed inaptitude of the materials to be shaped and arranged; and the defects and deformities by which the universe was supposed to be disgraced, were to be ascribed not to his want of will, but to his deficiency of power*.

III. The popular creed of Greece and Rome was an extravagant Manichæism, in which demomiacal powers were mingled with divine. The philosophers adopted, but modified the doctrine. An eternal and disorderly principle was supposed to interfere perpetually in the government of the world. The existence of moral evil, not to be accounted for, as was thought, under the sole dominion of a benevolent deity, was thus explained; and the wisdom and goodness of the ruling god were subjected to a counteracting and malignant power, in order that the schools might theorize more plausibly on the disorders and derangements which seem occasionally to occur in the economy of the world†.

These were the defects which were common to the theology of all the most illustrious of the Greek and Roman philosophers. Let us now advert to the peculiar creeds of the different schools of Zeno, of Plato, and of Epicurus.

Of the ancient sects, the Stoics were the most manly and correct in their moral precepts, and the

* Appendix, note D.

† Plutarch affirms that this doctrine was widely diffused, and he himself strenuously maintains it in his *Platonic Questions*, and his *Timæan Psychogonie*. See also *De Isid. et Osir.* tom ii. p. 369, 570. Ed. Francof.

most credulous and superstitious in their theological dogmas. At one moment, the universe is their god, at another moment, an ethereal flame*. Of this fancied divinity the unity and universality are occasionally affirmed; yet, occasionally, all nature is crowded with deities; and the seas, and the earth, and the stars, and the souls of men, are lavishly invested with the attributes of Godhead†. Thus the universe is god, and an aggregate of gods; and thus the Stoic holds out to the worship of his disciples, not a pure, infinite, and eternal spirit, the omnipotent Creator and Governor of the world, but a diversity of material forms deified by his ignorance, or of physical causes adored by his credulity.

Zeno reasons on his system. In attributing divinity to the world, it was incumbent on him to prove that the world possessed the powers of divinity, and was a sentient, animated, reasoning, happy, and eternal being. In accomplishing this purpose he proceeds with all the skill which sophistry could supply. His school applauds; the world listens; and, after all, his demonstration consists of a series of syllogisms which can only excite a smile for their absurdity, or only deserve to be noticed as

* Cogimur dissentione sapientum dominum nostrum ignorare; quippe qui neciamus soli an ætheri serviamus. Cicero. Academ. Quest. lib. ii. c. 41.

† Hac mundi divinitate prospecta, tribuenda est sideribus eadem divinitas, ut ea quoque rectissime et animantia esse, et sentire atque intelligere dicantur, ex quo efficitur in deorum numero astra esse ducenda. Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. ii. c. 15. With the same facility the other portions of the world were endowed with godhead; and such were the arguments which, in antient times, were to lay the foundations of human worship.

so many exemplifications of the vanity of human wisdom*.

Epicurus is more bold and impious in his tenets, but not less absurd. Rejecting with contempt the creative, or rather forming, power, which some philosophers ascribed to the gods†, he frames a finite, corporeal, and contradictory divinity, which, according to the varying fancy of its creator, was clothed with different forms and invested with different attributes. It was occasionally arrayed in human shape, because, in that shape only, as it was pretended, a proper sensorium for the divine nature could be found‡. At other times, it was fancied to consist of a totality of worlds, all of which were perpetually in a state of renovation, or decay; and, in wilder moods, it was placed in that infinity of indivisible corpuscles, which, though utterly devoid of intelligence, and influenced by no intelligent cause, have formed, by a fortuitous felicity of movement, the beautiful and magnificent structure of the universe||.

* The Stoic, in Cicero, repeats these syllogisms with great confidence, and seems to think them irresistible. See Appendix, note E.

† De Nat. Deor. lib. i. § 9, &c. Cudworth, Intellectual System, vol. 1. p. 60.

‡ *Aperta simplexque mens, nulla re adjuncta, conciliique participens, fugere intelligentiæ nostræ vim.* De Nat. Deor. lib. i. § 2. The Epicurean, elsewhere, endeavours, to refine the materiality of his god, into something approaching spirit; and he talks very unintelligibly of its consisting—non corporis, sed quasi corporis, non sanguinis, sed quasi sanguinis—The sophistry was worthy of the school.

|| Cotta, in the masterly treatise of Cicero, alludes to the extravagant doctrines of Epicurus—*Sed ubi est veritas? In mundis innumerabilibus, omnibus minimis temporum punctis, aliis nascentibus,*

This deity, whatever he be, is yet said to be supremely blessed, and capable neither of suffering nor inflicting pain. Of the felicity which is thus conferred, we possess a full and explicit description. Though moral attributes be essential to happiness, and action be essential to moral attributes, the divinity of Epicurus possesses neither the attribute nor the activity. He is no longer the corpuscular deity, the deity clothed in the form of man, or the deity constituted of aggregated worlds, but a nameless power, which, scorning to inhabit the dwelling of visible nature, resides in certain imaginary regions, in the depths of space, where the clear and cloudless ether is brightened by the beams of eternal sunshine*. There, operating no good, exercising no faculty, demonstrating no glory, he enjoys the boasted beatitude of perpetual rest, a languid, unvaried, and dead repose. To preside over the order of nature; to preserve, regulate, and govern, the world; to effuse the blessings of a guiding and beneficent Providence; or to listen to the supplications of human infirmity and want, would be utterly incompatible with this serene and celestial tranquillity, and would supersede the felicities of slumber by the toils of agency. Why, indeed, it is asked, should the deity disturb himself with the affairs of the universe? What does it concern him whether

tibus, aliis cadentibus? An in individuís corpúsculis, tam præclara opera, nulla moderante natura, nulla ratione, fingentibus. De Nat. Deor. lib. i. § 24.

- * *Quas neque concutiunt venti, neque nubila nimbis
Adspargunt, neque nix aeri concreta pruina,
Cana cadens violat, semperque innubilus Æther.
Integit, et largo diffuso lumine ridet.*

Lucret. lib. iii. 19.

the world exist or perish? And, if he be supremely happy in his own nature, what motive can exist to induce him to substitute, for a secure and unimpassioned blessedness, the cares and labours of providential interposition*.

From impieties and contradictions thus gross or absurd, we turn to the philosophical reveries of the academy.

The master of that learned but sceptical school, though he was frequently little more than a metaphysical poet, or a poetical metaphysician, who was ardent to decorate truth with the trappings of fancy, has often promulgated tenets on the subject of Deity, which are, indisputably, noble and sublime. But, if he occasionally surpassed all his cotemporaries in the dignity and purity of his principles, he was occasionally to equal them in inconsistency and error. While his eloquence expatiated on the perfection and glory of the divine attributes, he was a polytheist who delighted in a pantheon of his own creation; and he not only rejected the *atheism* of the creed of Anaxagoras, who denied the divine nature of the celestial bodies, but frequently and seriously affirmed the divinity of the stars, and recommended them, like other gods, to the faith and worship of the people†.

Yet numerous as is the host of his deities, he assigns the government of the world, not to their power and wisdom, but to the agency and skill of a plastic soul which he diffuses through the universe. In

* The felicity said to be enjoyed by the deity of Epicurus, is properly estimated by the stoic, in the Treatise of Cicero. *De Nat. Deor. lib. i. § 40.* The whole passage is eminently beautiful.

• Plato, *de Leg. lib. x.*

explaining the manner in which this mighty power operates upon matter, the speculative philosopher degenerates into the adventurous rhapsodist. The being of which he speaks, is alternately spiritual and material. In one page it is represented as a vital and quickening energy, ruling without the instrumentality of a material form ; in another, it is a brazen or fiery body, by the propulsion of which the sun and stars are moved and governed ; and, whether it be a vital energy, or a fiery body, it intimately unites itself with all material existence, penetrates and blends with the least and mightiest masses, and excites and regulates, with omnipotent wisdom, the powers and movements of universal nature.

This, however, is not the supreme divinity of Plato. The philosopher asserts a deity of incomparably an higher nature, and of the most pure and perfect unity. Of this unity every tenet is involved in darkness. It is said to be so utterly unmixed, as to include neither intellect nor intelligence, because these imply multiplicity, and, consequently, diversity of qualities, by which the unity would be impaired. Nothing, therefore, is to be predicated of the mysterious Being, to whom this transcendant simplicity is ascribed. He has no qualities ; he is engaged in no operations ; and he is to be considered as utterly devoid even of the attributes essential to the exercise of that " goodness," of which he is supposed to be the essence, the beginning, and the end.

He is the eldest and the most perfect deity. The vital energy, or the fiery body, is, according to the master of the academy, far less antient and divine. The qualities or perfections, however, which were considered as utterly inconsistent with the essential and absolute unity of the first, have been prodigally

lavished on the inferior divinity; and, while the one was to remain idle and vacant from all the operations which we would humbly ascribe to a supremely good and powerful Being; the other was to be the great demiurgical god, the pervader of the earth and the heavens, and the undisputed ruler of that universe which was formed and embellished by his power and his wisdom*.

Consistently with the principle on which the academy was founded, these opinions were proposed with the most sceptical reserve. Wild, chimerical, and mysterious, they were less recommended by the authority, than disparaged by the hesitation, of the master spirit from which they issued. To the philosopher they brought no knowledge, to the multitude they offered no edification. They neither retarded the progress of error, nor accelerated the diffusion of truth; and faith and motive could derive neither strength, nor confidence, nor dignity, from a system which might justly be described as composed of clouds and founded on shadows, as a mass of fancies, eluding, by its mysteriousness and incongruity, not merely the comprehension of the ignorant, but the reason of the wise.

The theologists who have been here reviewed, satisfied, says Cicero, with the approbation of a few judges, proudly, or prudently, averted themselves from the "profane vulgar;" but it is admitted also, that the "profane vulgar" reprobated and detested the doctrines and impieties of the theologists†. It is not difficult to determine which

* Appendix, Note F.

† Et philosophia paucis contenta iudiciis, multitudinem consalto fugiens, eique ipsi suspecta et invisâ; ut vel si quis universam vel vituperare, secundo id populo facere possit. Cicero. Tusc. Quæst. lib. i. § 1. lib. xiv. § 12.

was more wise, this learned scorn, or this popular aversion. Where he who listened was to hear nothing but the captious contradictions of contending sects; where erudition was employed but in the combats of sophistry, or exercised its powers but to extend and deepen the glooms of uncertainty and doubt; where every school was an arena, in which the gladiators of sophistry were to contend, not for honourable victory, or generous renown, but for the vain praise of a faction or a sect; where the creed, as of Pythagoras, was portentous and dark*; or, as of Plato, was mysterious and contradictory; or, as of Epicurus, was impious and atheistical; or, as of Zeno, was superstitious and gross; where all was an entangled and gloomy labyrinth, in which they who pretended to possess the clue were inextricably lost, and common sense was never to find conviction and repose; under such circumstances, it was surely better to take refuge in established though erroneous doctrines, than to enlist under the banners of a philosophy so pernicious and perplexed; it was better to embrace even the errors of a settled and public religion, which still afforded some guiding principle to the world, than to adopt the tenets of a theology, which, far from being either wise or useful, was calculated only to disturb, divide, and distract mankind.

* Eusebius justly calls it—*τιρατωδης σοφια*. Evangel. lib. xiv. c. 12.

SECT. II.

Mythology of the Hindus—Sublime ideas and definitions of Divinity—Innumerable gods—Contradictory Attributes—Benevolent and Evil Genii—Contrast of Divinities—Incarnations numerous and whimsical—Character and adventures of the incarnate Powers—Assumption of the forms of bears, lions, tortoises, men—Magii and Necromancy—Subordinate power of the deities—Creation—The whole system pernicious or absurd.

WHEN we proceed from the Tyber and the Ilissus to the Ganges, and inquire of the Bramin what are the attributes of his divinities, we may sometimes hear a language more instructive, and more consonant to truth. He does not trace his doctrines to the defective knowledge of the statesman, the pundit, or the bard; but to the divine wisdom of the Shastrum and Purana, and to the holy colloquies of the Bagvhat-Geeta*; and, instead of being obliged to search for scanty and ambiguous instruction in the unauthenticated pages of the poet or of the philosopher, he may refer to the sublime tenets of volumes which he considers as marked with the impress of inspiration, and sanctioned by the authority of heaven. His religion, therefore, as he believes, utters no mortal voice. It speaks from the lips of deity. The disciple listens with acquiescence or veneration; and the respect and humility which suppress inquiry and comment, rescue him, at least, from the fluctuations of doubt, and the glooms of infidelity.

* The Bagvhat-Geeta is an episode in the Mahabaret, a poem of great antiquity and extent.

By numerous passages of his sacred books the Hindu is emphatically instructed in the nature and attributes of God. "The Supreme," as it is said, "was, at first, that which exists unperceived, pre-
 eminent, that which is, and must remain*—He is
 the Almighty Being, the prime Creator, the world's
 mansion, the incorruptible Being distinguished
 from all things transient, the antient Poorosh, and
 supreme supporter of the universe, and by whom
 the universe is spread abroad—He is immaterial,
 and, therefore, above all conception; he is invi-
 sible, and, therefore, can have no form; and from
 what we may behold of his works, we may con-
 clude that he is eternal, omnipotent, omniscient,
 and omnipresent†—He is the creator of all things,
 the ineffable and inexhaustible source of all that is,
 the great Everywhere, always‡—By his power he
 framed all things from the four elements; infinite
 is he in glory; nothing is like him in the three
 worlds; wherefore he only is to be adored, and we
 bow down before him, and supplicate his mercy§." These doctrines are of a sublime character. They indicate a high degree of attainment in the teachers by whom they were uttered, and of civilization in the people to whom they were announced; and, perhaps, they will not be found to be surpassed by the noblest tenets on the same subject, of the most applauded philosophers of Greece and Italy.

* The prayer of Arjoon in the Bagvhat-Geeta, pp. 94, 95. Translat.

† See Dow's Dissertation, p. 4.

‡ Bagvhat-Geeta; translat. p. 84. See also Ayeen Akberry, vol. iii. Bernier, Voyage, tom. ii. p. 159.

§ Code of Gentoo Laws, Prelim. Disc.' p. 73. Bagvhat-Geeta, pp. 94, 95.

But the authors of the Braminical religion afford us another instance of the frailty and fallibility of human creeds. Scarcely have they uttered the wisest and most salutary doctrines, when they descend to the most puerile and extravagant fancies. In their reveries, sometimes as obscure as the metaphysical Plato, and sometimes as wanton as the comic Aristophanes, they have blended the lofty and the ridiculous, the true and the false, the useful and absurd, in one extravagant mass, which they denominate religion; and the faith of their followers is perpetually tried, or insulted, by contradiction and incoherence, and trained to embrace, for the fair form of celestial wisdom, the unholy progeny of pious ignorance or fraud.

The "Every-where, always," is a profound and emphatic definition of Deity. The religion of Brama frequently forgets it, to descant on the doctrine of a universal soul, and its perpetual emanations*; or of a first mind, which, generated by death, trembles with alarm in the solitudes of space, and pines for a companion who might soothe the dulness of his unvaried existence†. The licence of fable, however, speedily supersedes the reign of these powers, and innumerable gods spring up, better calculated to excite the zeal of popular superstition. Brama and

* All intellectual natures, and especially human souls, are essential portions of this Being, and separated from it by an inconceivable emanation. When the stains, however, which they contract in their earthly wanderings, shall be purified by a due course of migration and punishment, they are destined to return to the source from which they flowed. *Bagvhat-Geeta*, pp. 39, 65, 78, 85, 115. Bernier, tom. ii. p. 163. *Voyage de Sonnerat*, v. i. p. 192.

† Appendix, Note G.

Cali are invested with omnipotence. The throne of heaven is constructed for Indra "with innumerable texts of the Vedas." The daughter of Ambrhina, the mighty Vach, assumes the dominion of the ocean, the firmament, and the fire. The beautiful Nerayan, whose flowery braids reach to her ankles, and whose robes, brighter than sun-beams, "shed their heaven-spun light over circling worlds," is liberally gifted with pre-eminent powers. Ganesa, the deity of wisdom, and the parent of things, appears to preside over various companies of the gods. Indra, the god of the visible heavens, resides on a polar mountain of gold and gems, and exercises his authority to regulate the winds and the showers. Yalona, the offspring of the sun, who claims the triple honours due to the king of justice, the lord of the patriarchs, and the judge of departed spirits, determines the punishment of the guilty in the doleful region of serpents, or consigns polluted souls, for their purgation, to some animal, vegetable, or mineral form. The Argus Cortyceya, with his six faces, and countless eyes, is the leader of innumerable armies, and the subduer of the mighty giants Sita and Ravan. And the dire and tremendous Seshanaga, the king of serpents, the black god, the sovereign of the infernal regions, whose thousand heads are each encompassed with a crown of starry gems, whose eyes gleam like flaming torches, and whose garments are skirted with yellow flames, bears aloft in his arms the holy shell, the radiated weapon, the mace of war, and the divine and immortal Lotos*.

These are among the gods of a higher class; but myriads of subordinate deities, and beneficent or evil

* Sir William Jones on the Gods of Greece, Italy and India.

genii, are equally admitted and adored by the credulity of the Hindu. The various passions of man, the different allotments of life, and the diversified scenes of material nature, have their presiding divinities. Beauty, jollity, and sport, the bud that bursts forth in spring, the rose of summer, and the harvest of autumn, the hopes and fears of the youthful lover, the felicities of domestic union, the pleasures of social intercourse, are all placed under the influence of powers scarcely less lovely in form, than kind and gentle in attribute and will. The jocund Suradevi, who sprang from the agitation of the sea, watches over the ripening grape, and the must of the vine vat. The nine Gopia, the Muses of the East, breathe their inspirations into the heart of the poet, and instruct their disciples in the science of sweet sounds. Rembha, who is attended by celestial Asparas, the gay and blooming daughters of Paradise, delights to be called the goddess of beauty, of tenderness, and of joy. The youthful and immortal Camdeo, whose bow of sugar-cane is strung with bees, and whose arrows are tipped with blossoms communicating the blessings of love and the ardours of desire, comes from the orient bowers of Agra, while enamoured gales shed around him from their wings, celestial fragrance. And the heavenly Sereswaty, the divinity of song, calls forth from her bower the seven melodious notes, while the young passions collect around her, and sigh, and tremble, and hope, and fear, as they listen to the inspiring harmonies of her lyre and of her voice*.

* Sir William Jones on the Gods of Greece, Italy and India. See also his beautiful translation of the Indian hymns to Camdeo and Sereswaty.

But, while deities of this beautiful and interesting character crave the altar and the oblation, the deities of evil are not less numerous, which demand the worship of the Hindu. Among these are gods of the most earthly and carnal temper, gods of cruelty and wrath, gods who require the sacrifice of the tongue of their votary torn from its roots*, who indulge at once the passion of obscenity, and the thirst of blood, and who delight in the shrieks of the expiring votary, crushed beneath the wheels of their festal car. Calavatri, the goddess of darkness, presides over the axe of destruction. The black and hideous Calica becomes propitious in proportion to the blood shed upon her altars. The "horrid-toothed" Cali rejoices in the terrors of the human sacrifice: and Devi knows no feast comparable to the last agonies and shrieks of expiring man†. These powers constitute but a few of the demoniacal beings which afford such a frightful contrast to the more gentle and amiable divinities of the Hindu religion. We see, at the same moment, celestial levity or joy dancing and sporting before us, and divine cruelty and wrath stretching out their arms to afflict and destroy; and we contemplate with astonishment, a whole people adopting and adoring the most contradictory gods, and tendering their devotions with equal zeal, to the young divinities of pleasure and of love, and to the deified furies of vengeance and of ferocity.

* In the rites of the stern and sanguinary Matta, the worshipper was induced to tear out his tongue, and offer it to the goddess, by the delusive hope that a new tongue would germinate in three days from the root of the old, to attest the approbation of the propitiated power. Ayeen Akberry, vol. ii. p. 113.

† Ayeen Akberry, vol. iii. p. 241. Roger, *Porte Ouverte*, p. 251. Heetopades, pp. 185, 322. *Voyage de Sonnerat*, vol. i. p. 207.

The tales, consecrated by a religion which embraces such an extravagant Polytheism, are numerous and wild ; but human invention seems to have reached its utmost limits of extravagance in the fables which relate the adventures and follies of the incarnate deities of the Bramin. In one of these Avatars, the god becomes a gigantic boar to draw up the earth from the ocean in which it had been submerged. He appears, in another, as a mighty tortoise to sustain the globe, which was convulsed by the malignant potency of demons. In a third, he veils his glory in the form of a devouring lion, and, rushing from a pillar of marble, rescues a religious son from an impious father, and destroys the father to vindicate the majesty of offended justice. The fabulists with whom these singular fictions originated, proceed with equal wantonness of fancy, to detail various other descents of the divine nature. But their imagination has indulged more than its usual licence, in the prophetic description of that final Avatar which shall complete the long series of celestial incarnations. In this descent, the Divinity shall appear marked by every thing that is unappeasable in wrath, and unmitigable in vengeance. He shall be seated on a steed of stupendous magnitude and irresistible impetuosity. His form shall be that of a portentous and terrific giant. From his eyes shall flash consuming fires on the souls of men ; and with a scimeter flaming like a comet, he shall indignantly mow down all the incorrigible and impenitent offenders of the earth*.

Some of these Avatars are of a more gentle and playful character. In one of them, the eternal Krishnu

* Sir William Jones on the Deities of Greece, &c.

assumes the form of a shepherd lad. He, at first, abode in the rustic family of Ananda, and was occupied in the care of herds and flocks. His companions were the young gopas and gopis of the surrounding country*; and, attracted particularly by the blooming and smiling countenances of the last, he selected from among them a train of favourite associates, with whom he sported away his hours in the gay revelries of dance and song. He was himself of perfect beauty, and was adored, not only by the damsels who shared his pleasures, but by the most distinguished and lovely of the princesses of India†. Not always, however, did he devote himself to the tendernesses and levities of love. His pastoral joys were frequently renounced for heroic achievements. In the very boyhood of his days he slew a multitude of serpents, monsters, and giants. The tyrant Cansa fell beneath the strength of his manhood; and, having finally punished, after a long and desolating war, the crimes of the Curus and their chiefs, and communicated all moral and political precepts to the favoured Arjun‡, he returned with the praises and blessings of

* The gopas are literally cow-herds, and the gopis milkmaids. Sir William Jones. Dissertat.

† The women of India adore him to this day, as a being peculiarly favourable to the gentler and softer passions; and they describe themselves in their hymns, as bearing continually in their bosoms the image of the amiable god, "who, for sportive recreation, with a train of young dairy maids, dances gracefully, now slow and now quick, on the sands just left by the daughters of the sun." Sir W. Jones. Dissert.

‡ Arjun is the principal hero of the Mahabaret; and the episode of the Bagvhat-Geeta contains a long detail of the war with the Curus, and of the holy and edifying conversation of Krishnu with Arjun.

mankind, to enjoy again the immortal felicities of his celestial mansion*.

It was not sufficient to invest these deities, in their descent, with high and irresistible powers. The poet, or the priest, has decorated their forms with all the embellishments which an eastern fancy could bestow. They are crowned with starry coronets. A circle of rays plays round their heads. Their ears, their necks, and their bosoms, flame with the lustre of inestimable gems. Bracelets of costly jewels decorate their arms; and a loose mantle of golden tissue descends, in flowing drapery from their shoulders, and is gracefully folded across their breast. To these decorations are superadded others, when the form of Krishnu is to be adorned. He is perfect in loveliness. The bloom of eternal youth rests upon his countenance. His eyes beam with immortal radiance. The fragrancy of celestial flowers breathes eternally around him; and he is distinguished by a garland of roses, of jessamin, and of myrtle, which encircles the divine symmetry of his waist, and gracefully descends in blooming and odoriferous wreathes to his feet.

Yet the beings who were embellished with such rich and ostentatious prodigality, were often to be subjected to the most degrading humiliations. Subdued by the power of infernal arts, they heard and obeyed the voice of magic and enchantment; and, among several others whom the necromancer

* In one of the Sanscrit romances, the descending deity somewhat resembles the shepherd Krishnu. He was cradled and educated among herdsmen. At seven years of age he bore a mountain on the tip of his little finger. He was said to be unsullied by sin; yet his manners were libertine and debauched, and his wives and mistresses constituted a numerous and splendid harem.

Ravana compelled to attend on his household and his person, the divine Indra was to supply him with fresh and fragrant flowers; the omnipotent Brama to proclaim his title, and announce his glory; and the supreme Vishnu to instruct the dancing girls of his palace in the arts of blandishment, and to select and adorn the fairest among them for the high honours of his royal bed.

The religion which raises the eyes of men to deities like these, speaks of the exercise of creative power in a manner not more instructive and wise, nor less wild and obscure. Two self-existent beings are admitted, yet one is evidently anterior to the other. The first deity dispels the gloom of the undistinguishable chaos, and agitates the stillness of the primeval waters. The second, subsequently emerging from a golden egg, "blazing like a thousand suns," and in which he had dwelt from immemorial times, proceeds to form the heavens and the earth of the fractured portions of his deserted mansion. The one is desirous of producing various creatures by emanations from his own being. The other is described, at the same moment, as the great parent of things, and denominated the author and preserver of the universe. Such are the inconsistent and contradictory dogmas, on the most solemn and sublime of all subjects, which demand the acceptance and belief of the pious Bramin. He may hear with astonishment and faith; but, from a lesson so unintelligible or absurd, he can derive no persuasion either instructive to his understanding, or salutary to his heart*.

We may now conclude, that the Hindu has not been less prodigal, or more edifying, in the structure

* Appendix, Note H.

of his polytheism, than the Greek. All nature, the meads, the groves, the streams, the mountains, the skies, are colonized by his fancy with appropriate demons, genii, and demigods. Superior and sub-altern powers, nymphs of revelry, of dance, and of song, deities passing their days on earth in wanton pastime and whimsical achievement, gods distinguished by ferocity and cruelty of will, and by passions and desires equally impure and gross, spring up, at his potent bidding, on every side, and perform the parts which he assigns them; while common sense beholds with more astonishment, the freaks, the vices, and the follies of this celestial populace, than the fairy gambols and goblin feats recognized by the credulity of northern superstition.

SECT. III.

The Koran—Magnificent description of Divinity—The divine unity—Percersion of the abstract doctrine—Accommodation of the divine nature to the views of the prophet—Fraud and libertinism sanctioned by celestial precept—Abrogations—Instability of the purposes of God—The doctrine dictated by the appetites and ambition of Mahomet—The religion proportionally corrupt in its most essential dogma.

THE Koran affords a view of the divine nature very different from that which is opened by the Grecian or Indian theology. Preceded by the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel, it occasionally borrowed light and wisdom from them all; and its pages are, sometimes, perhaps, not wholly unworthy to vie with those in which Moses has embodied so many sublime and salutary truths, or which are illuminated and sanctified by the perfect principles of Christ.

In the chapters of the Koran, the passages descriptive of the attributes of God are, often, as splendid as they are just. The unity and glory of his being are asserted with great force and dignity of language. The gods of the polytheist are discarded with contempt; and, if the sublime annunciations of Deity in some places, were not frequently contradicted by the qualities and interpositions attributed to him in others, the Koran might have claimed, on this great article, the respect, the admiration, and the adoption of mankind.

“ God! There is no God but he, the living, the self-subsisting. Neither slumber nor sleep seizeth him. To him belongeth whatsoever is in heaven and on earth. He knoweth that which is past, and that which is to come. His throne is extended over the universe. He is the high, the mighty *!”— This is certainly magnificent. Doctrines so sublime cannot uselessly be impressed on the heart. They may be enfeebled in their influence by counteracting tenets; but, abstractedly considered, considered in the majesty and glory which they disclose, the Christian may say with the Musselman, “ this is the God who created the world, and who presides over it in wisdom and in power!”

In founding his religion upon the fundamental doctrine of the unity of God, Mahomet has merited the praise, and become the benefactor of mankind. By that single act of prudence, or of wisdom, he has driven polytheism, with all its vices, from numerous nations, and has contributed to interweave in the faith of a considerable portion of the human race, a principle high and holy in its nature, and most salutary in its

* Koran by Sale. Vol. 1. ch. ii. pp. 47, 48.

moral and religious influence. Regions which, otherwise, perhaps, would have been taught to lavish their adorations on a statue or a stone, have been instructed to contemplate perfection to which the eye can never be elevated in vain. The creed which extends so widely over the east and west, carries with it at least one noble and redeeming tenet; and, for the pernicious absurdities of Pagan superstition, we rejoice to behold a substitution of the first and most important principle of genuine religion.

But concession has its limits. It is not so much by abstract declarations and dogmas, as by the attributes and operations ascribed to his nature and providence, that we are to estimate the deity of any creed. The Jove of Greece and Italy was denominated the "Jupiter maximus et optimus," the greatest and the best: but what is the value of the definition which is contradicted and falsified by the crimes of the adulterer, the parricide, and the usurper? The Brama or the Cali of the Indian is described as the omnipotent and the wise; but what description can justify our adoration of the god, whose mystical generation we trace to an egg of gold, or who delights in the blood of the human victim? Of natures like these, however they may be occasionally invested with perfection, we cannot admit the claim to respect and reverence; and where the acts and dispositions are so incompatible with the imputed character, the veneration demanded by the last, is lost in the disgust and contempt excited by the first. Let us in this light consider the Deity of the Koran.

Mahomet had many passions to indulge, and many ambitious views to accomplish; and he well knew these purposes could derive no aid, because no sanction, from the simple but sublime tenet of the unity

of God. He, therefore, brought down the Deity, whom he had represented in such glowing colours, to co-operate in his designs; and he daringly invests himself with the high authority of the delegate of heaven. "There is no God, but God, and Mahomet is his prophet!" At the moment when that declaration was made, the kingly and priestly throne of the adventurer appeared to be sustained by the approbation of the Almighty. A garb of majesty was thrown over the form of impurity and imposture, and the objects and despotism of the asserted missionary of heaven, were no longer to be opposed without rebellion against the authority of heaven itself.

The tenet which thus associated the divine nature with human iniquity, was effectually employed by the author of the Koran. He went forth with the authority, and brought down upon his vices the sanction, of God. A celestial and irresistible instrumentality appeared to surround him, and to be subservient to his appetites and his will. Did he require an unbounded range for the indulgence of his libertinism? The Deity was to extend a ready assent to his prayer. Was he anxious to be liberated from the restraint of a voluntary and solemn oath? Here also he was to experience the divine indulgence. Was his infamous passion disappointed by the chastity of Zeinah? A celestial text was to condemn her resistance, and she was instantly to be added to the number of his harem. Even on occasions which should rather have called down upon him a curse and a punishment from above, he could take refuge in the asserted permission of the Almighty. Seven hundred captives, long after the rage of battle might be supposed to have subsided, were to perish by an indiscriminate slaughter, in order to satisfy the revenge or the ferocity of the

conqueror. But the people were not to be permitted to attribute the infamy of such a massacre to the prophet. He had his justification; for the Almighty directed his arm, and authenticated the deed. In this manner the Deity is degraded to subserve the passions of his pretended minister; in this manner he is exhibited as the abettor of the worst and foulest crimes; and, when we consider him as thus accommodating himself to the vile and vicious propensities, and the cruel and unmitigated barbarity, of an ambitious Arab, we are averted with painful emotion from a Being so devoid of goodness and of wisdom, and we may scarcely be allowed to prefer him either to the Jupiter of the Greek, or to the Brama of the Hindu*.

But the divinity of Mahomet is not merely exhibited as the friend of grossness, ferocity, and corruption. He is represented as descending to the meanest and most contemptible employments. With precepts for the moral regulation of the world, he mingles rules for the correction and restraint of female perversity, and for the use and mode of female ornaments†. His laws, sometimes directed to the best interests, frequently minister to the illegitimate appetites, of men; and he may be said to announce with the same care, the permission and order of impure enjoyment, and the discipline which is necessary to train mankind for eternity‡.

* Appendix, Note I.

† "Those whose perverseness ye shall be apprehensive of, rebuke, and remove them into separate apartments, and chastise them. Kor. ch. iv. p. 100. Let them throw a veil over their bosoms, and not shew their ornaments, nor make a noise with their feet, that the ornaments which they hide may be thereby disclosed. Kor. ch. xxiv. vol. 2. p. 192.

‡ White. Bampton Lect. Sermon ix. See also Koran, ch. ii. p. 40. The passage may not be quoted.

“ In God there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” The divinity of the Koran is a different Being. Mutable as the policy, or the fortunes, of the prophet, he varies his laws with the facility with which he utters them, and varies them for the accommodation and indulgence of the impostor. The doctrine which was given as an eternal rule, is soon, if occasion require, to be abrogated as pernicious or absurd. Stability of purpose and of will is lost in the frailty of change; and the decrees of an omniscient Divinity are announced, confirmed, or repealed, according to the revolutions in the views and passions of a scheming, corrupt, and ambitious mortal*.

The Deity of Mahomet is, then, an inconsistent and contradictory Being. He is the High and the Mighty, whose wisdom never fails; and the degraded abettor of brutal incontinence and lust. He is the living and self-existing, whose throne extendeth over the universe; and the merciless preceptor of massacre and of spoliation. The perfect source of goodness and truth, and the author of precepts and injunctions favourable to the worst purposes of hypocritical licentiousness. The immutable and omniscient God, and the flexible, the varying, and the facile Deity, who is obedient to the whims or appetites of “ the last and best of the prophets.”

“ The last and best of the prophets ! ”—How has he justified, in such a tablet of the divine nature, the

* The passages abrogated in the Koran are of three kinds. The first, where the letter and sense are both abrogated; the second, where the letter only is abrogated, and the sense remains; and the third, where the sense is abrogated, though the letter remains. Yet all the passages so abrogated were equally communicated by God. Sale's Kor. Prelim. Disc. p. 89. sect. iii.

haughty assumption of such a title? He was endowed with many talents, and he enjoyed many advantages. He possessed distinguished sagacity and eloquence. He could enforce his tenets with great magnificence and felicity of language. He derived illumination from the lights of the Jewish and Christian dispensations. Yet he, too, in framing a religion, afforded only another evidence of the multifarious deficiency of human legislation; and if, in his wiser and better moments, he embellished his page with beautiful and imposing imagery, or enriched it with sound and salutary truths; he became, in the moment of the misrule of his appetites and passions, the selfish adventurer who was to render the Deity himself ministerial, as far as possible, to his libertinism and his power. What has been the result? His system of faith has been vitiated in its fundamental and most essential doctrine. Instead of being instructed by just and holy views of the Sovereign of the Universe, we are taught to look up to a being of almost human frailty; and the Koran has been rendered the depository of inconsistencies and of contradictions, offensive to the purity and majesty of God, and degrading, in the highest degree, to the faith by which they are embraced.

SECT. IV.

The character of CHRIST as a religious legislator—His mode of teaching—Views of Deity—His purity, ubiquity, omnipotence, and sovereignty—His moral and relative attributes—The object of reverence, of hope, and of trust—The harmony of his attributes—His unchangeableness and consistency—The condescension and mercy with which he visits the afflicted, the poor, and the forlorn—Comparative estimate—From whence had Christ the wisdom which so far transcended, on the subject of the divine nature, that of the most distinguished legislators of the earth!

FROM the bard, the moralist, and the sage, of the most civilized nations of former days, and from the Arabian legislator, who enjoyed admission to the founts of Jewish and Christian wisdom, we now turn for the truths which they have so utterly failed to supply, to the volume of the Gospel.

He who would found a pure and salutary religion, not for a period or a people, but for all nations and all times, must speedily prove himself inadequate to the work, if he do not possess an assemblage of faculties, of virtues, and of powers, such as, hitherto, appear not to have existed in unaided man. To no evil design, no licentious passion, no selfish ambition, must he be subject or sensible. All those frail and feverish desires, which have so perpetually marked the legislators of the world, must be utterly excluded from his bosom. He must exhibit in his life the precepts of righteousness which he announces with his lips. For views of personal advantage he must substitute those of universal good. No concession must be made to the fleshly appetites, or ignorant prejudices, of men, for the purpose of conciliating popular favour. The prepossessions of sects,

of tribes, or of nations, must not reach him, or reach him only when they are innocent. He must address himself not to the Jew or the Gentile, but to man; not to the few of a time or territory, but to the species, present and to come. With these qualities he may proceed to build up the structure of his religion; without these he will exhibit but a new instance of human incapacity for so sublime a work.

In announcing the doctrines on the Being and Attributes of God, which distinguish and dignify the Christian dispensation, it would appear that Christ, and, under him, the teachers whom he had chosen for the purposes of his mission, exercised the virtues and graces which have been here enumerated. To the truths which they uttered, and the manner in which they taught, we look for the evidence of this assertion.

I. In the academies of the learned, our applause may be sometimes extorted by the logical subtlety and acuteness of the sophist; but we are often confounded by nice and disputable distinctions, and by the gloomy abstractions of a sceptical metaphysic. Whereas in Christ, and his disciples, we discover nothing of this pride of science, nothing of this jargon of disputation, nothing of this skill in the weapons of debate. Whether God indulge in the useless felicity of eternal repose; whether he be an ethereal flame which pervades and animates the universe; or a golden circlet which embraces the world; or a Being composed of parts perpetually emanating from his person, and destined finally to return to it; are questions utterly different from those which they discussed. What they conceived of the divine nature, they uttered with that soberness and simplicity, which truth so easily prefers to the tricks and garniture of

awful or more abstract perfections, may excite in the mind the most profound and, perhaps, overwhelming emotions. But from the relationship of God to man, which is thus beautifully unfolded, and the relationship of man to God, which is thus emphatically implied, we derive considerations of a more affecting and instructive character. There may be less to astonish, but there is more to interest. A new dignity appears to be conferred upon our nature. We are no longer dust and ashes, but the children of the Omniscient, to partake the blessings of his protection and of his love. We are elevated and ennobled by the consciousness awakened in our bosom of our high descent; and we are taught to look up to God, with that humble but affectionate gratitude, which, wherever it is felt, affords new motives to piety, and new obligations to virtue.

III. Religion, were it to excite only joy, would become the source of levity and of folly; were it to excite only fear, would become the source of despondency and alarm; and, in either case, man would be perverted in his actions and aims, degenerating, in the first, into the fool who knows no restraint, or, in the last, into the slave who knows no hope. But the wisdom of Christ was to instruct and elevate, not to enfeeble or overwhelm, the heart; and his gospel, therefore, has afforded grounds neither for irreverent hope, nor unmitigated fear. Is the God whom we are taught to worship, the Father of spirits who keeps mercy for thousands of them that love him, who compassionates and embraces the returning sinner, who maketh the sun to rise upon the just and the unjust, and who willeth

Matt. v. 48; xviii. 14; vi. 14, 26, 32; vii. 11; x. 28; vi. 10; xxvi. 39; xxii. 37. Mark x. 18. It would be easy to collect *texts like these* from almost every page of the Gospel.

not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should return from his wickedness and live? By such views our affections are awakened; our trust and fortitude confirmed; a light is kindled amid the glooms of time and of the world, which warms and animates the soul; and a confiding faith is encouraged and sanctioned in the heart, which enables us to proceed in our pilgrimage through life with serenity and with peace. But the Gracious Benefactor to whose mercy seat we are thus encouraged to approach, is, also, the Mighty One of Israel; the King immortal, eternal, and invisible; the All Wise whose slightest glance pervades the inmost recesses of the heart; the holy and just who will by no means pardon the guilty; the Almighty who dwelleth in the secret place of the thunder, whose throne is wrapped in mysterious and unapproachable light, and at whose presence the universe trembles and bows down. While we dwell on these magnificent and awful representations, the heart is impressed with corresponding emotions. Hope and joy are blended with sacred reverence and salutary fear. Guilt is intimidated and repressed. We tremble though we trust; and the confidence that reposes in celestial goodness, is chastened and admonished by the apprehensions that point to celestial majesty and justice.

IV. In every other religion, from a variety of causes, the Divinity is degraded into a being of criminal or contemptible inconsistency; and not only are his attributes occasionally at war with each other, but, in the exercise of his powers, he is alternately feeble and mighty, dignified and corrupt, magnificent and mean. We behold the Jove of the Greek laying aside the thunders of Omnipotence, to soothe

his cares in the dalliances of love ; we see the god of the Mussulman blending maxims of high and practical wisdom, with the gross sanction of concupiscence and impurity ; and we contemplate the deity of the Bramin descending from the throne of his majesty, to traverse the earth under low and ludicrous forms, and generally, for low or ludicrous purposes. But the Christian legislator was not to be led aside from truth, by prejudice or by passion. In the Deity, disclosed by his gospel, we discover no contradictory qualities, and no intermixture of greatness and wisdom with littleness and folly. A sublime and uniform consistency, on the contrary, between the abstract and relative perfections of the divine nature, and between those perfections and the operations in which they are employed, is maintained in every page. No feebleness limits his justice, no wrath silences his mercy, no error impairs his designs, no partiality misdirects his power, and no prejudice controuls his will. His compassion extends itself even to the sinner, but his truth and equity remain unviolated. His goodness and beneficence descend in blessings on the universe, but he does not the less mark the ways of the guilty, nor hold in his hands the meed of punishment. In the same sublime accordance is the precept which he sanctions, with the perfections in which he is cloathed, and the providence which he exercises ; and the precept, the perfection, and the providence, collectively considered, afford an accordant and unequivocal testimony of the unvarying and unalterable excellence of his nature.

V. The gospel opens another, and not less interesting view of the nature and attributes of God. His will is the law of universal existence ; and he

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

cloathes himself in the might and majesty of unbounded power. But this great and wonderful Being delights not so much in the name of the omnipotent and omniscient God, as of the God of the fatherless and of the widow. All nature is beheld and governed, but he dwells with especial complacency in the meek and contrite bosom, and peculiarly rejoices to heal the humiliated and broken spirit. While his decree prostrates the pride, and dashes in pieces the iron sceptres, of the tyrants of the earth, his protecting care visits the poor in heart, and his staff sustains the simple and lowly in the toils of their pilgrimage. To nobles and kings, who load his altars with their oblations, he prefers the humblest of the peace-makers of the world, who labour to diffuse good-will among men. It is not the sons of ambition and conquest, of whom it is declared that they shall see him; but the children of humility, of mercy, and of righteousness. And the felicity of his kingdom, which is no where said to be especially reserved for the mighty and the great, is explicitly announced to the afflicted of the earth, who, for his sake, are reviled and persecuted. Nothing surely can be more lovely than this celestial portraiture of divine condescension and benevolence. Power may be feared and revered. Wisdom may be adored and obeyed. Glory may astonish and confound. But when we behold Him who inhabits eternity, and clothes himself with light, and stretches out the heavens like a curtain, thus descending in graciousness and compassion to abide with the poor, the destitute, and the forlorn, we become sensible of emotions at once more delightful and more salutary, and we hasten to offer him, with ardent but humble acknowledgement, the holocaust of the heart.

The conclusion which follows from the whole of this detail, is as obvious, as it is important.

We have examined the religions framed in India, in Italy, and in Greece, by that unassisted reason whose pretensions are so lofty, and whose capacity is so extolled. What have we discovered? Have we been instructed in the first and fundamental principles of all religion, and taught to contemplate a deity, worthy, in any sense, to be embraced by human faith? On the contrary, we have been repelled by the most gross and lamentable superstition; and have found nothing better than a system of impossible or contradictory deities, invested by their very worshippers with unqualified folly or crime, and adopted and adored with a zeal as ardent as its objects were ludicrous and impure.

In this respect, the most savage hordes, in the most savage age, have not been surpassed by nations the most learned and refined; and the Scythian clan does not exhibit a more deplorable perversion of reason and of faith, than the Braminical college, or the Grecian community. All, however variously endowed, the barbarous who implicitly assent, and the civilized who anxiously inquire, are here equal in the absurdity of their errors, and the fatuity of their creed. The mythology of one realm, however decorated by fancy, will not be found to excel that of another, however coarse and rude in its structure; and the Deity every where worshipped, can scarcely be regarded but as the monstrous phantom of a sick dream, or as the astonishing and whimsical production of the mingled powers of fantastic hope, and superstitious terror.

Even the faith of the philosopher and his sect was scarcely less absurd than the whimsical superstition

of the popular belief. Amid the shades of the Academy, the Portico, and the Lyceum, the jargon of contradiction and incoherency was perpetually heard; and the most sublime and comprehensive intellect frequently mingled, with its brighter and better convictions, doctrines and reveries, not less gross nor less idolatrous than those of the despised and credulous vulgar.

Under better auspices arose the aspiring and sagacious Arabian. He had learned to despise the idolatry of the polytheist; and the Pentateuch and the Gospel supplied him with the most beautiful and affecting representations of divinity. But he who could lay the foundations of a mighty empire, and mould and controul the passions of men, was also to fail as a religious instructor; and he never wandered from the guiding lights of Moses and of Christ, without affording an instance of incapacity to erect the structure of a pure religion, and displaying an ignorance of the nature and attributes of God, scarcely more enlightened than that of the Grecian, or Hindu mythologist.

That which the sagacity and learning of so many sages and legislators had been utterly unable to discover, is announced clearly, fully, and distinctly, in the gospel. Who instructed the son of an obscure carpenter to kindle this light? Where did the unlettered simplicity of Christ learn to promulgate a doctrine, in all its grandeur and purity, compared with which the noblest annunciations of deity by the master spirits of the earth, was absurd, impious, and corrupt? Shall we attribute to unassisted reason, in this meek and humble teacher, the discovery of truths to which the unassisted reason of so many

accomplished minds in so many ages had not been able to approach? Or shall we rather admit that his wisdom issued from a higher source, and was derived from heaven, for the guidance and illumination of mankind?

CHAPTER III.

PROVIDENCE.

SECT. I.

The Providence of the Mythology of Greece and Rome—General views sometimes sublime—Particular doctrines—Controuling power of chance, fortune, necessity, and fate—Passions, frailties, and vices, exercised in the Divine government—The councils of the gods—Inconsistency, selfishness, injustice—Minor powers, jealous and vindictive—Consequences on popular belief—The opinions of the learned—Scholastic reveries—Impiety, superstition, and contentions of the philosophers—Their doctrines useless or pernicious to mankind.

THE foundations of religion are to be principally laid, first, in the doctrines of the Being and Attributes of God, and, secondly, in those of the nature and operations of Providence.

The notions communicated on these subjects are, in the highest degree, of a practical nature. They are to affect the worship of man in the recesses of the temple, but they are also to influence his conduct in the walks of life. Every devotional and moral principle they are to reach, and to vitiate or to dignify. What men are instructed to reverence, they will be inclined to imitate. According as the Deity is exhibited in his qualities, his operations, or his designs, he is held forth to mankind as a corrupt or sublime example ; and that example will proportionally promote, because it will proportionally sanction, the vices or virtues of human life.

With the universal consent of mankind, if we except only the hardy and ignorant rejection of a few sceptics, who, in every age, have erected the standard of infidelity, the doctrine of a presiding and governing Providence has been proclaimed and admitted. Wherever man has been found, there also the altar and the sacrifice have attested the ardour of his faith. Supplication and prayer have alike issued from the lips of the savage and the civilized. It seems as if man were formed to be no less a religious than a social being; and it will not be too much to consider the world as a mighty and august temple, in which, with all the diversity of tongues and knowledge, the sovereignty of heaven was to be acknowledged and adored.

In proportion as this tendency is powerful and universal, it should be regulated, corrected, and informed; and we proceed to inquire how far it has been so disciplined and instructed by the sages of the world?

It will not be denied that the poets and teachers of Greece have sometimes discussed the subject with great piety and wisdom, and happily directed the hopes and fears of men to a sovereign ruler of the universe. By some, a divine government was deduced from the order and motion of the heavenly bodies, which so clearly manifest interposition and design; and by others, from the occurrences of life, which, so often defeating the counsels of the wise, and the designs of the mighty, may emphatically attest the interposition of superior power*. To im-

* *Et male consultis pretium est, prudentia fallax,
Nec fortuna probat causans—
Scilicet est aliud quod nos cogatque, regatque
Majus, et in proprias ducit mortalia leges.*

Manilius, lib. iv

press this awful tenet upon the mind, a wise and just appeal was made to the heart of men. "Repose your weakness on the gods," says Juvenal, "for they love man better than he loves himself*." "Innumerable deities surround us," says Hesiod, "to watch over the movements of thought, and the motives of conduct†." "When we act justly," says Homer, "heaven prolongs our days, but punishment is awarded to the wicked‡." "Every man," says Lucan, "depends on the will of the gods, and the most secret deeds are open to their inspection§." "To Jupiter," says Æschylus, "we owe an undivided heart; darkness with him is light; from the heights of heaven he beholds the impious; he wills and is obeyed§." In this manner the doctrine of

* Juvenal, the censor and moralist of his age, exhibits, in his tenth Satyr, the genius which embellishes wisdom, and the wisdom which ennobles genius; and there is not a passage, perhaps, in any poet, which approaches nearer to the doctrine of the Gospel, than that which, in this Satyr, refers to the justice and beneficence of the divine administration.

Si consilium vis

Permittis ipsis expendere numinibus, quid

Conveniat nobis, rebusque sit utile nostris.

Nam pro jocundis optissima quæque dabunt Di.

Carior est illis homo quam sibi.

It would be almost thought that the Pagan satyrist had been admitted for a moment to the Christian fountain.

† Die and Oper. v. 250.

‡ Odyss. lib. xiii. v. 214.

§ Heremus cuncti superis, temploque tacente

Nil agimus nisi sponte Deo.—Non vocibus ullis

Numen eget.

Pharsal.

§ Æschyl. Suppl. Act 1. See also Euripid. Orest. Act 1. Iphigen. In Taur. Act 2. Æschyl. Eumenid. Act 1. Sophocl. Oedip. Act 1. All the works of the Greek and Roman poets abound with authorities of this nature.

a Providence was occasionally announced and applied. The worldly mind might have been admonished, the pious mind enlightened and cheered ; and all might have learned to contemplate the celestial superintendence which was so taught, with the mingled sentiments of salutary awe, and sustaining hope.

But, unhappily, here, also, just persuasions were enfeebled in their influence by very different tenets.

I. Almost in the same page in which a divine administration was unequivocally and emphatically affirmed, the powers of chance, or fortune, of necessity or of fate, were announced and deified, as the invincible and the eternal directors of the human world. The hymns of the lyrist celebrated the high-sounding praises of these shadowy beings ; and even the epic and tragic Muse descended from their lofty strains to countenance by their authority the same obscure or impious jargon. To the wise agency of Providence was thus opposed the domination of blind but counteracting powers. The fable of poetry became a rule of faith. The people were left to fluctuate between a paramount destiny which controuled the gods, and presiding gods which controuled mankind. Nothing stable remained, on which religious trust might repose ; and, while the learned were to wander from doubt to doubt, and from supposition to supposition ; the ignorant were to be involved in the mischiefs of this pernicious uncertainty, and to float amid the billows of life, unsettled in their conviction of that power which lifted the wave, or controuled the storm.

Think, says Agrippa to the Roman people, of that irresistible necessity, to which the gods themselves

must submit*;—you deceive yourselves, says Prometheus to the chorus in the tragedy, fate is superior to wisdom, and Jupiter himself is governed by it †;—Fortune, says Seneca, rules without order the affairs of men, and blindly scatters her gifts over the world ‡. This language was of popular usage, and addressed to, and admitted by, the popular faith. But, under the impression of such tenets, who was to distinguish the point where necessity ceased to operate, and where the rule of a just and beneficent Providence commenced? Who was to be adequately restrained by his reverence of the majesty or consoled and fortified by his confidence in the goodness, of gods, thus described as inferior to a blind and unintelligible fate, and thus admitted to be controuled in their administration of the world? The whole doctrine was compounded of the most jarring elements; and human belief, equally indeterminate and vague, was left to fluctuate between an omnipotent fatality without wisdom, and controuling gods without omnipotence||.

II. When the poet or the philosopher speaks with more reverence of the divine administration, the gods are exhibited in a manner scarcely less calculated to avert the piety and the faith of the votary. What guilty and grovelling passions are beheld in

* Dionys. Halicarn. lib. v.

† Æschyl. Prometh.

‡ Res humanæ ordine nullo

Fortuna regit, spargitque manu

Numera cæca, pejora favens.

Senec. Hypol. Act 3.

Yet Seneca was a Stoic, who admitted the innumerable deities of his master Zeno, and could sometimes speak in sublime terms of the superintendence of Providence.

|| Appendix, Note K.

action, and what vile and execrable deeds are perpetrated, when the deities appear on earth, and mingle in the affairs of men ! How are the wise and the virtuous overthrown, and the unworthy favoured and aggrandized, for the more ready accomplishment of some celestial prejudice, or the more perfect indulgence of some celestial depravity ! No less than three deities are occupied in accelerating the ruin of an unoffending woman *. The "ox-eyed venerable Juno," irritated by the illicit loves of her august spouse, visits with unappeasable vengeance the heroic and blameless Hercules. The laughter-loving Venus repays the judgment of Paris by the persecution of the Greeks ; and the decision of the apple prepares the way for the misery and massacre of a ten years' war. From these pictures of folly or of barbarity, what were the people to learn of the nature and motive of celestial interposition ? And with what trust were they to recognise the providence of beings whom they were virtually instructed to detest or despise, and whose cruelty and caprice, scarcely redeemed by a single virtue, could scarcely awaken any emotion but terror and dismay ?

III. Nor was the Greek or Roman votary to discover any thing more likely to purify his conceptions of the providence of his gods, when he adverted to the views disclosed by the poets, of the general temper of the synods of heaven. If he had been permitted to contemplate unity of design and benevolence of will in the discussions of the celestial assembly, he would have been proportionally instructed to trust, to reverence, and to hope. But

* *Æneid.* lib. iv. With what inimitable grace has the poet veiled the impurity of the tale !

he was left to deduce the interpositions of Providence from no such source. The consultations of Olympus, with which the tales of his bards familiarized his fancy, were conducted by beings only of vile and contemptible passions, and were perpetually distracted by discord and turbulence. He heard the debate in which the welfare of the world was less the topic of discussion, than the conflicting purposes of the gods themselves; and he traced the decision, which was to regulate the administration of human affairs, to celestial folly, caprice, and crime. From such a representation what was he to conclude? Amid such levities and distractions where was his faith to look for providential aid? And what justice or goodness of interposition was he to expect from powers so adverse to each other, and so little inclined to sacrifice their individual prejudices and passions to the wisdom and consistency of their common sovereignty*.

IV. But the disciples of the Greek and Roman creed, were not merely to contemplate the government of these conflicting gods, but to dread the interposition of minor powers yet more frail and malignant. It was an essential dogma of their religion that the influences of hell were to mingle with those of heaven, in the administration of things; and that the vindictive or unsteady agency of superior deities, did not, in any wise, preclude the operation of demons and furies, the ready ministers of vengeance and of woe. Até and violence ascended from the regions of night and darkness, to pour their dis-

* Homer and Virgil, and all the religious poets of Greece and Italy, have recorded numerous instances of the confusion and discord which prevailed in celestial debate. It would be a useless labour to quote the passages.

cords and miseries over the earth*. Terror, accompanied by paleness and fear, scattered abroad alarm and dismay†. Alecto exercised her scourge and launched her serpents, and her infernal sisters lent their aid to persecute and destroy. Under this mixed and singular system of administration, every evil was diffused, and every passion indulged. A rite forgotten, a sacrifice neglected, the slightest casualty, the most venial error, were sufficient to provoke some wrath, and to kindle some jealousy, fatal to human welfare and repose. The very crimes inspired by the gods themselves, by the gods were to be punished. Man was afflicted because he had been the instrument of powers which he could not resist‡; and it was openly avowed that “there was

* In the nineteenth book of the Iliad, Agamemnon complains of the irresistible power of this Goddess of discord and malediction. Virgil represents her in colours yet more dark.

Et scissa gaudens vadit discordia pallâ
Quam consanguineo sequitur Bellona flagello.

Æneid. lib. viii.

et discordia demens

Vipereum crinem vittis innexa cruentis. Æn. lib. vi.

The picture of Petronius is yet more striking and poetical :

hujus in ore

Concretus sanguis, contusaque lumina flebant.

Stabant irati scabrâ rubigine dentes,

Tabo lingua fluens, obessa draconibus ora,

Atque in toto laceratam pectore vestem

Sanguineâ tremulam quatiebat lampada dextra. Petr. Salya.

† Hesiod. Theog. lib. iv. The simplicity of Hesiod did not think it necessary to conceal the vices of his gods. His works contain the essential spirit of the Greek mythology.

‡ Seneca speaks of Œdipus as—Phœbi reus—and the exclamation of the suffering hero—Fecimus cælum nocens,—sufficiently explains the nature of his faith. Seneca Œdip. In this tragedy the poet sometimes elevates the rhetorician, but the rhetorician more frequently subdues the poet.

nothing certain in human affairs, and that the rulers of the world, influenced neither by benevolence nor by wisdom, cast all life into confusion, and mingled, as they pleased, reverses and contradictions in the concerns of men*.

A providence of such a character was well calculated to excite, at one moment, emotions of terror, at another, of contempt. We, accordingly, find that the popular faith frequently vibrated between these contradictory impressions. The language of superstition was often succeeded by that of impiety, the language of impiety by that of superstition†. He who trembled at an evil omen, could yet dare to insult his gods‡; and the populace themselves, idolatrous as they were, could rush, in a moment of irritation, to the shrines of their deities, and stone, with infatuated indignation, the wonted objects of their reverence and fear||.

The most learned and accomplished scholars of Greece and Italy scarcely taught or knew any thing better on the subject of Providence, than the doctrines adopted by the superstition of the vulgar. They did not, perhaps, believe that Jove was to be cir-

* Euripid. Hecub. Hume quotes and comments on the passage. Nat. Hist. Rel. sect. lii.

† " Their authors sometimes placed a stroke of impiety, and one of superstition alternately, in a whole discourse." Hume Nat. Hist. of Rel. sect. xii. The instances are innumerable.

‡ Augustus Cæsar, on the loss of his fleet by a storm, threw the statue of Neptune indignantly into the sea. The inconsistency of the emperor has been observed by Hume, Nat. Hist. of Relig. sect. xii. who seems a little astonished at the fact which he relates.

|| The populace were so enraged, on the death of Germanicus, with their gods, that they stoned their statues in the temples. The same people would have been alarmed by the sinister flight of a crow.

cumvented by fraud, that he might be lulled into deceitful and pernicious slumbers, or that he could be seduced from the cares of government to enjoy a twelve days revelry at the festive board of the *Æthiopian**. But we discover, in their writings, inconsistencies and contradictions, yet more gross than the dogmas of the popular creed. Nothing can be occasionally more pious than their faith, or more philosophical than their submission; but, they speedily forget the divine administration on which they had founded their momentary trust. By some of them, the ruling power is discovered in man himself, and human foresight and wisdom are exalted to the throne of all the divinities†; while others, unable to reconcile, with their ideas of justice and benevolence, the interpositions attributed to their gods, satisfied themselves with the conclusion that the deities act by laws peculiar to themselves‡, and disdain to include within their government the petty and transitory interests of human life||. The wis-

* Jupiter is frequently deceived by his wife. Iris is dispatched to urge Achilles to battle, not only without the consent, but knowledge, of the "Ruler of gods and men." *Iliad*, lib. xiii. Sleep approaches him unperceived. *Iliad*, lib. xiv. And his frequent riots on "the distant banks of Oceanus," and the delight with which he inhaled the steam of the victims, are also recorded by the piety of Homer. *Il.* lib. i.

† It is the remark of Gibbon, *Miscell.* vol. v. v. 200, 203. Juvenal has frequently asserted the doctrine.

‡ *Sunt superis sua jura!* Ovid. *Metamorph.* lib. ix. l. 501. The question which reason was unable to solve, was answered by an absurd or impious supposition.

|| The interposition of the gods is denied in the Treatise of Cicero, and the denial is founded on the frequent prosperity of wicked men. *Cur omnium perfidiosissimus Caius Marius. Quint. Catulum, præstantissimum virum dignitate, mori potuit jubere?*

dom and majesty of heaven, it was thought, would have been disgraced by descending to inferior objects, and minute regulation. They were, accordingly, to be reserved for direction and controul more worthy of their intervention; and common men were in vain to look up to the superintending care, which was to be occupied solely by the fortunes of sages and heroes, of crowns and realms*.

The Stoic, among the philosophers, was of this opinion. According to him there might be, indeed, a Providence for great and especial occasions; but, though the monarch, the statesman, or the legislator, the rulers and guides of nations, were placed within the narrow circle of divine interposition, the poor and humble individual was too low and degraded an object to merit or to experience the care of heaven. Yet the deities of the school of Zeno, however they might reject the toil of inferior government, were not always occupied in grand and mighty operations. While they disdained to notice the sorrows or the interests of the mass of mankind, they submitted to the cares of a less salutary interposition; and they whose sublime and omnipotent powers would have been disgracefully lavished on the protection and guidance of the deserted multitude, consented to mingle in the fallacies and frauds of augurs and of priests; to instruct the votary by the ambiguous communications of dreams and visions; or to unfold their designs by the flight of

Cur tam feliciter septimum consul, domi suæ senex est mortuus?
De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. § 32.

* *Magna Dii curant, parva negligunt.* De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. § 66. The Stoic Balbus thus concludes his harangue in vindication of Providence; by circumscribing its operations.

birds, the entrails of victims, or the fury and contortions of the oracular priestess*.

The Epicurean pretended to scorn these idle reveries as the dreams of ignorance and of superstition. With an impiety which was as much more pernicious as it was more daring than the foolish credulity he contemned, he saw no Providence except in the fortuitous results of agitating and conflicting atoms. All mind and intelligence were proudly excluded, by his theory, from the management of the world. Supreme felicity was not to be disturbed by the anxieties of government; and the administration of reward or punishment would have troubled the peace or degraded the majesty of the celestial slumberer. What were the world and its concerns to him? He was to enjoy divine and eternal repose in the depths of space; and the happiness of his perpetual sleep was to be equally unimpaired, whether the universe were to exist in order, magnificence, and beauty, or sink in universal and interminable ruin†.

The disciple of the Academy might occasionally adopt a better and wiser theory. Though his chief divinity was an abstraction to which all faculty, attribute, and action, were denied, he admitted the

* Cicero *De Nat. Deor.* lib. ii. § 65. Cotta, in the Dialogue of Cicero, very dexterously ridicules the reveries of the Stoics. *Non curat singulos homines. Non mirum. Ne civitates quidem. Non eas? Ne nationes quidem et gentes. Quod si has etiam contemnet, quid mirum est, omne ab ea genus humanum esse contemptum?* *De Nat. Deor.* lib. iii. § 39. The Academician, in the whole controversy, is too much for the Stoic.

† *Nihil enim agit; nullis occupationibus est implicatus; nulla opera molitur; habet exploratum fore se semper tum in maximis, tum in æternis, voluptatibus.* *De Nat. Deor.* lib. i. § 19.

existence of deities who formed and presided over the universe. But we have already seen that he has circumscribed the authority which he thus conferred, that he invested the sovereignty of his gods neither with omniscient wisdom, nor with omnipotent power; and that his ruling deity, resisted by the inflexibility and perversity of matter, was unable to remedy the evils which, by that perversity, were diffused over the material world. Even fortune and opportunity are said, by the Platonist, to share with the gods the government of things, and fortune and the gods themselves, are subject to the irresistible despotism of the Fates*. These doctrines, however, are neither steadily nor uniformly maintained by Plato, or by his followers. The scepticism nursed in the shades of the Academy, was never to affirm, without hesitation and doubt; and we look in vain, on the subject here discussed, or on any subject, for a fixed and guiding light, to a school which was more anxious to confute the opinions of others, than to instruct mankind by its own†.

The Greek mythology, then, a work of so much fancy and contrivance, and the Greek philosophy, which exercised such great and pre-eminent talents, were equally and singularly defective in the tenets which they avowed of a divine government. Men looked for light, and they were involved in darkness; for truth, and they heard only the language of error. The same doctrines of Providence frequently

* Plato *De Legib.* lib. v. p. 598. *Oper. Lugd.* Plutarch *De Placit. Philosoph.* lib. i. c. 26. p. 884.

† The Academician, in the Dialogue of Cicero, admirably sustains the character of his school. He conquers, without hazarding a defeat. *De Nat. Deor.* lib. iii. See Appendix, Note I.

produced contradictory impressions ; superstition at one moment, and impiety at another. Faith grovelled, at once, and wavered ; and bard, and priest, and philosopher, and legislator, seem to have been occupied, from Homer to Plato, only to demonstrate, in this instance also, the incapacity of unassisted reason to frame a just, a pure, and a salutary religion.

SECT. II.

The Providence of the Hindu—Administered by various and contradictory powers—Licence, levity, or malignity of the interposition—Administration of deities under various forms—The boar, the lion, the tortoise, the fish—The views of the divine government not at variance with suicide and murder—The sovereignty of God degraded and insulted, and the general faith corrupted by the creed.

IN the scriptures of the Hindus, as in the volumes of the Romans and the Greeks, the interpositions of heaven, are sometimes represented with great precision and sublimity of language. We discover there the fancy of the poet, and the wisdom of the sage. Mercy and justice are exhibited in action ; and the “ Every-where always ” appears to extend his presiding care from the greatest to the least of beings.

But the Brahminical sages were as frail and inconsistent as the sages of the Greeks ; and their theology, vitiated by all the defects which are so thickly interwoven in the Grecian superstition, is a system in which the rare and scattered doctrines of truth are lost in a mass of multitudinous falsehood. Maintaining a polytheism which may be considered as the wildest offspring of Oriental extravagance, they necessarily subdivide the powers of Providence among

innumerable deities, and consign the universe to the government of beings, of various rank in the scale of divinity, and of diversified tempers, passions, and designs. Ganesa, "the leader of gods," is to be occupied in one department of divine administration*; Brama, the eternal one, is to preside over another; and Vishnu, the preserver, is to exercise his characteristic attributes in a third. For what remains there is no want of gods. A crowd of frail and fantastic powers, the progeny, by a vile polygamy, of superstition, wedded to fear, to fancy, and to credulity, are ready to interpose in the government of the world. The majesty and dominion of one controuling deity are never thought of amid the operations of this multifarious host; and all unity and uniformity of Providence are lost in a system carried on by a machinery of authorities connected by no common principle, and equally various in design and in operation.

Of these deifications each has his peculiar attributes and views. There is, therefore, no co-operation for partial, or for general, good. Every interposition flows from individual interest and will. The sanguinary power of the black Cali, may favour in her votaries the bigotry and the fanaticism which delight in the horrors of the human sacrifice. The laughter-loving Rembha, the goddess of beauty, may awaken her votaries to mirth and joy. And the deity of

* This god enjoys a very extensive dominion; the pilgrim and the traveller scatter flowers on his image, and moisten it with oil, before they commence their journey; the Bramin ascribes to him the sacred books; and his statue is erected in the temples, in the streets, and in the highways, that all ranks may be perpetually reminded of his authority and his providence. Sir W. Jones. *Dissertat. on the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India.*

Juggernaut, at once libidinous and cruel, may be propitious to the indulgence of those passions in man which he cherishes in himself. But there is here nothing to be expected but a mingled and mischievous government of licence, of levity, or of malignity. For the Providence which is the perfection of wisdom, is to be substituted the misrule of frailty and infirmity; for grandeur and utility of design, the various views of discordant powers; and for the sublime faith which reposes itself on the unerring agency of one supreme and beneficent ruler, the faith which is distracted and divided amidst a host of conflicting powers, who govern according to their individual caprice, or mete out their dispensations under the predominant influence of their individual passions.

Many of the Indian gods descended, as we are told, to regulate, by their visible interposition, the affairs of men. One, in the form of a mighty fish, bore along the vessel of a favoured monarch through the deluge of waters*. Another, in the shape of a boar, sustained the labouring earth with his tusk. A third, as a beast of prey, rushed upon and destroyed an impenitent sinner. When these deities assumed the figure of man, they scarcely exhibited an example more likely to excite in human beings a reliance on their providence. The most mighty feats were contrasted with the most puerile; giants were quelled, nymphs were subdued, desolate widows were provided with companions†, and the beloved

* Sir William Jones, on the Gods of Italy, &c.

† The men of Serendef were destroyed in war. The widows prayed for relief in their destitution. The gods heard their supplication, and their desires were gratified. Dow's Dissertat. p. 51.

Arjoon, elevated in a chariot above two hostile armies, was edified by eighteen interminable lectures on metaphysics and theology*. Such are the interventions ascribed to the incarnate deities of India. The tale might gratify the childish curiosity of a superstitious populace, or be worthy of the insane imagination of a Braminical zealot; but it degrades the agency of the gods whom it aspires to celebrate, and inculcates only the most mischievous or contemptible opinions of celestial interposition.

And that the most mischievous opinions have been, and continue to be, maintained by the Hindu, on the awful question of divine government, is not to be denied. He who believes in a wise and equitable governor of the universe, may wait with patience and trust for the issue of things. To him it will appear that God is the best and only judge of results, and to God he will calmly and humbly leave them. But the resignation of the Brahmin is not so disciplined to obedience or submission. He may be guilty of an act of suicide†, or he may accelerate the death of his infirm parent or helpless child‡; but he

* Two armies were marshalled against each other by the contending branches of the house of Basaret, and drawn up in battle array, in order to determine their difference by the sword; but the hero Arjoon was to be instructed by celestial communication in divinity in metaphysics; and the contest was consequently deferred, while the immortal Krishna edified his young pupil by so many lectures. The discussions are recorded in the Mahabarat, an abstracted, fanciful, obscure, and interminable poem.

† Suicide, as will appear hereafter, is expressly permitted by the religion of India.

‡ The old and diseased are frequently exposed on the banks of the more holy rivers, to be devoured by the alligator, or carried off by the tide. The old parent, his mouth filled with mud, and a cow tail in his hands, as a consecrated passport to a new state of

boldly appeals to his creed ; and his religion easily affords him authority for crimes which, under a more enlightened law, would be considered as, in the highest degree, insulting and offensive to the providence of God, and at variance with the most obvious principles of piety and of morals.

The doctrines, then, of the divine economy, as they are taught by the religion of India, are deeply marked with the character of impiety that misrepresents, and of folly that degrades, the sovereignty of God. The interposition of Deity is implicitly admitted, but the interposition is that of wantonness or caprice, of levity or crime. There are many gods to rule, and, therefore, there is a divided, there are many evils to interfere, and therefore, there is a discordant, government. When any of these powers condescend to appear in a visible form, they betray equal inconsistency and folly, and exercise their supernatural might in operations worthy only to be recorded among the grossest extravagancies of fable. These views not only foster the worst prejudices of superstition, but afford to crime the auxiliary support of religious persuasion ; and we close the sacred books of the Hindu, with the conviction that, in this instance, they tend, efficaciously and forcibly, to darken, degrade, and corrupt the mind of man.

existence, often perishes in this manner. Dow says, " the bodies of those devoted in this manner, if not otherwise destroyed, are left in the highways to feed kites and vultures." Dow's Dissertat. p. 31.

Sickly children were customarily suspended in baskets on the branches of trees, and so left to perish. A wise and humane decree of the Marquis Wellesley, when governor of India, put an end to this savage custom.

SECT. III.

Providence of the Koran—Sublime representations—God the inspector of the heart, the giver of victory, the ruler of the world, who punishes the wicked, but easily forgives the penitent and the humble.—Percussions of the doctrine—The ministers of God, Israfil, Azrael, Gabriel—Their wild and extravagant agency—The inspectors and witnesses—The punishment of the grave—The slumber of the cavern—Fantastic and puerile interposition—The wrath and favour of Providence subservient to the will of Mahomet—Consequent intolerance, persecution, and ferocity of the Mussulman.

WHEN Mahomet assumed the office of a public teacher, he was not ignorant of the best and purest doctrines which had been announced, on the subject of Providence, by preceding religions ; and the sagacity is admitted with which he, occasionally, selected and employed the noblest tenets of the Pentateuch and of the Gospel. Sublimely, indeed, and magnificently, does the Koran sometimes speak of the order and of the blessings diffused through the universe by the sovereignty of God. The might, the majesty, and the mercy of superintending Deity are proclaimed in a manner not ill according with the grandeur of the subject ; and we are impressed with a deep sense of the wise and beneficent operations of the Almighty. Who is God ? He, we are told, who provideth for the good of all his creatures, the powerful protector and father of the universe. Is he wrapped, on the throne of majesty, in unspeakable and eternal splendor ? He yet sends forth his decrees, and executes his purpose, not only with all the might of supreme authority, but with all the goodness of illimitable benevolence. His is unerring and eternal justice. His eyes reach to the most secret depravity, and to the deepest recesses of the

heart of the sinner. Nothing escapes from his view. His scrutiny penetrates all things, and his government is as perfect as his scrutiny.

“ Not so much as the weight of a feather is hidden ,
“ from the Ruler of the earth. He seeth into the
“ heart. He is the only giver of victory. Hell lieth
“ before the wicked. Death also shall come upon
“ him from every quarter. His works are as ashes
“ which the wind scattereth in a stormy day. Never-
“ theless God is easily to be reconciled, and merciful,
“ and forgiveth the penitent and contrite sinner*.”

While the moral government of God is thus represented in the Koran, his government of material nature is described with equal force and beauty of language. We hear the sublime and penetrating voice of truth proclaiming the eternal wisdom, which, with the same ease, reacheth the minutest atom, and mouldeth and guideth the mightiest masses, of the universe. “ Verily our speech unto any thing, when
“ we will the same, is, Be, and it is. It is I who bid
“ the dews and rains descend upon the earth, and the
“ flowers and plants to revive and flourish, and food
“ to spring up for the sustenance of man ; and who
“ said, in the days of Noah, O earth, swallow up thy
“ waters, O heaven, withhold thy rain, and it was done†.” Passages like these abound in the Koran. We admit the energy of the language in which they are expressed, and the sublimity of the doctrine which they convey. A particle of the fire which touched the lips of the prophet of the old dispensation, seems to have rested also on the lips of Mahomet ;

* Koran, ch. vi. p. 166 ; ch. x. p. 9 ; ch. iii. pp. 78, 79 ; ch. ii. p. 29 ; ch. xiv. p. 60.

† Kor. ch. xvi. p. 80 ; ch. x. p. 22. Sale's Translat.

and we almost imagine that religion herself addresses and exhorts, by his voice, the children of men.

How unstable and frail is all human excellence? How liable all human knowledge to be mingled with impurity and error? By the same person who was capable of unfolding such grand and such rational views of the providence of God, doctrines were to be announced and enforced of the most erroneous and reprehensible character. Passion, selfishness, ignorance, and fraud, were to mingle the vilest tenets with the brightest of those which had been selected with so much wisdom from the Gospel. Almost the same moment was to be marked by contradictions; and truth, and error, rapidly succeeding to each other, alternately illuminate and darken the pages of the Koran.

If we may assert any thing of Providence, it is, that the wisdom and goodness which it exercises are the same from eternity to eternity, and always worthy of the perfections in which they dwell. The aspiring Arab was not, apparently, governed by this opinion. To the sovereignty, which is occasionally described as regulating the world with omniscient goodness, are imputed, more frequently, the folly or the injustice of weak, wanton, and arbitrary dominion. He of whom it is said, that "there is not a grain concealed in the darkest part of the earth, but he knows it*," is yet represented as consigning to the most extravagant agents the high powers of protection and punishment, as appointing them the inspectors and witnesses of human deeds, and as authorizing them, after they had presided over the hour and pangs of death, to erect

* Kor. ch. vi. p. 166.

their tribunal amid the ashes of the grave, and to call departed humanity to trial and to judgment*, Even the precepts and ordinances communicated by the celestial ministry of Gabriel, are frequently and speedily abrogated by contradictory annunciations from heaven ; and that Being in whom there is no change, appears to indulge the wantonness, the caprice, and the mutability, of man†. Does the prophet require new doctrines to favour the policy demanded by new and different circumstances? Are his insatiable passions to be indulged in privileges proportioned to their progressive impurity? Had he, in the infancy of his power, held forth promises to his followers, which his established authority enabled him, and his individual interests called upon him, to rescind? Does he wish to renew the indulgences, which he had lately renounced with the solemnity of an oath? He brings down a complying and convertible providence to vindicate and sanction the revolutions of his will; and precepts descend from heaven, with inexhaustible prodigality, to justify the almost diurnal variations of the caprice, the temper, and the passions of the prophet‡.

The angelic ministers, in general, whom he employs in his machinery of the divine government, are made the perpetual subjects of crude and ludicrous fable. In none of them do we discover the bloom

* Kor. ch. viii. vol. 1. p. 222, and ch. xlvii. " There are two angels who attend on every man before and behind, and these are changed every day." Kor. ch. xiii. vol. 2. p. 55. See also Sale's Prelim. Dissertat. sect. iv. p. 94.

† Appendix, Note M.

‡ The passages are quoted in the 1st chap. sect. iii.

and beauty of celestial natures, in none of them the form and movements of grace, or the kindly and ardent benevolence, which might be supposed to distinguish the inhabitants of heaven. Cloathed in darkness suited to the gloomy agency in which they are employed, or armed with maces of iron to bruise the temples of departed sinners, they are the remorseless "spies of the living;" the "drivers and witnesses" of the dying and the dead; the un pitying judges who are to call before their tribunal the dwellers of the tomb; the hideous "summoners" at whose voice the realms of death are to tremble, and every departed soul, even on the night of the sepulture of its body, is to come forth for judgment*. If, in the description of such beings there be great wildness and wantonness of design, there is, in the ministry, the most glaring and incongruous absurdity. But, in these delineations, Mahomet was to consult the heated and undisciplined imagination of the multitude; and they who would have been feebly impressed, perhaps, by chastised and rational representations of divine agency, were to be roused, for the purposes of the prophet, by bold and romantic tales of the terrific Azrael, the minister of death, and the despotic Israfil, the summoner of the resurrection.

Even of the high and distinguished Gabriel, the agency is described in a manner scarcely less strange. He is the perpetual minister of God, yet he ascends to the throne of heaven but in "a day whose space is fifty thousand years†." Sometimes he is seen "beside the Lotos tree, in the seventh heaven, beyond which the angels are not permitted to pass;"

* Appendix, Note N.

† Kor. ch. lxx. vol. 2. p. 458.

and, sometimes, he is beheld sailing from "the highest part of the horizon, and descending at the distance of two bows length to reveal that which he reveals*." But he is principally employed in vindicating the Koran, and punishing its opponents. "I will surely," said he to the prophet, "take thy part against the scoffers †." Accordingly, invested with the might of Providence, he goes forth, at the head of the Moslem, to smite the infidel; and the eye of the Prophet is permitted to behold him, amid the carnage of battle, mounted on his horse Haizum, followed by an irresistible array of auxiliary angels, and every where, in furtherance of the divine purpose, scattering, overthrowing, or exterminating the foe ‡. The populace, persuaded by such tales that their prophet enjoyed the favour of heaven, were animated with proportional zeal in his cause. The impiety became accessory to the ambition of the impostor; and the vileness and profligacy of mortal views were to derive aliment and strength from the very insults which degraded the providence of God.

But the economy of heaven was to be still further degraded by the burlesque misrepresentations of the Arabian legislator. We contemplate with astonishment and reverence, the sublime operations of divine

* Kor. ch. liii. vol. 2. pp. 401, 402.

† Kor. ch. xv. vol. 2. p. 75.

‡ The victory was accomplished by the aid of Gabriel, and a legion of four thousand angels. The followers of Mahomet were at first blind enough to attribute the success to the skill and valour of the prophet; but they were soon better instructed. Kor. ch. viii. vol. 1. p. 226. See also Kor. ch. iii. The faith of the "true believers" seems to have been sufficiently tractable to the purposes of the master spirit which had impressed it.

power, and with love and gratitude the effusions of divine beneficence. The tales in which the Koran describe the operations of Providence, are calculated to excite very different emotions. After Abel had fallen by the hand of Cain, the body, we are told, was to remain unburied till "God sent a raven to instruct the murderer how to hide the shame of his brother*." The Israelites had unhappily eaten fish on the Sabbath day, and God said to them, "Be ye changed into apes, and driven from the society of men, and they were changed†." The Moslems were dissatisfied with the manner in which the spoils of the infidel were divided, but a voice from heaven appeased the contest, and vested the power of distribution in the will of the prophet‡." The wives of Mahomet had presumed in secret to canvass the debauchery of their husband; and instantly a celestial messenger was dispatched to inform him of their audacity, and to enforce conjugal submission and docility by the menace of a divorce§. And the Christian youths¶, so famous in religious story, were laid asleep in a cave for three hundred and nine years, were miraculously guarded by their dog "with his fore feet stretched out at the mouth of the cell¶¶,"

* Kor. ch. v. vol. 1. p. 136.

† Kor. ch. v. vol. 1. p. 143. See also Note by Sale, in loco.

‡ "They will ask thee concerning the spoils; answer, The division of the spoils belongeth unto God, and the apostle." Kor. ch. viii. vol. 1. p. 222.

§ Kor. ch. lvi. vol. 2. p. 447.

¶ They fled to the cavern from the persecution which commenced under the Emperor Decius, and ceased under the milder despotism of Theodosius. This slumber scarcely lasted two hundred years. Gabriel, or the prophet, was a little too minute.

¶¶ The dog, according to the Mohammedan writers, followed them to the cave, and when they endeavoured to drive him away,

were frequently turned in their slumber of centuries from the right hand to the left by the care of God himself*, were regularly visited by the beams of the sun, which changed its course twice every day to illuminate the cavern, and were finally awakened to become the living monuments of the goodness, the wisdom, and the power, of Providence†.

Among these ludicrous or contemptible fables, the wildest dreams of the Talmudists are detailed with earnest minuteness, or expanded with fanciful and rhetorical exaggeration; and credulity and superstition are amply indulged with a series of divine interpositions, which equally violate the records of history, and the persuasions of common sense. God is, thus, on countless occasions, exhibited as the ruling power of a romance, and not as the all-wise and omnipotent sovereign of the universe; and the designs and operations in which he is said to exhaust his attributes, are not more entitled to respect and belief than the wonders which are sometimes ascribed to the necromancy of magic. Abraham is delivered up to the infidels, and cast upon the pile; but God said, "Fire be thou cooled," and Abraham was preserved‡.

God caused him to speak; and he said, "I love them that are dear to God; go sleep, therefore, and I will guard you." This dog is held in great veneration by all true Mussulmen, and a place is assigned to him in Paradise, with some other favoured brutes. Kor. vol. 2. p. 114. Note, by Sale.

* Lest their flesh should be injured by lying too long in the same posture.

† The prophet was doubtful of the number of the sleepers. Kor. ch. xviii. vol. 2. p. 115. Was not Gabriel sufficiently instructed to inform him?

‡ Abraham is said to have been brought by God out of the land of Ur of the Chaldeans, Gen. xv. 17. Mahomet, with some of the ignorant Jews, understanding Ur, not as the name of a city, but

The hand of David, wearied with the protracted labours of the harp, sunk exhausted upon the strings; but the mountains and birds are taught to relieve the bard, and to continue the hymn in praise of the Almighty*. If Solomon is to be disciplined by trial, a "counterfeit body" is placed on the throne from which he is cast down; if to be encouraged by recompense, the winds, made subject to his will, are to run gently at his command, and the devils, delivered to him bound in chains, are to erect his palaces and his pavilions, to lavish around him a more than earthly magnificence, and to bring to his treasury the collected treasures of the deep†. In tales like these the genius of Mahomet delights to sport; but every fable is the annunciation of angelic lips, and the intervention which is proclaimed, is communicated and confirmed by the inspiration of heaven.

While the prophet indulged in these pretences, or wantoned in these absurdities, he knew how necessary it was to the purposes of his ambition, to inculcate such persuasions of the divine interposition, as might attach to his cause the bigotry and enthusiasm of his countrymen. The Mussulman was, accordingly, instructed that, for him, especially and exclusively, were the aid and blessings of Providence reserved. At the same time that he was to be exalted, in his own conception, above the common condition of man, the rest of the world was to be regarded as reprobate of God, and devoted to the sword; and a credulous and fanatical race was thus

as the appellative of fire, forms, from such slight materials, his fantastic tale of the danger and deliverance of the patriarch.

* Kor. ch. xxi. vol. 2. p. 161, and Note, in loc.

† Kor. ch. xxxviii. vol. 2. p. 321. Appendix, Note O.

taught to consider extermination as a duty connected with the designs of heaven, and to deduce their justification from the will of Providence, while they stained and deluged the world with the blood of the outcast and devoted infidel*.

According to these doctrines, the divine administration was but a series of interpositions, in motive partial, in design cruel, in operation unjust. Man was divided, by the express declaration of heaven, into two classes, the one, consisting of a few petty tribes, to be sustained and exalted by the favour, the other, including the great mass of human existence, to be devoted and cast down by the reprobation, of the Almighty. It was not the "multitude of the isles," it was Mecca and her prophet, that were to rejoice, "because the Lord was king." The whole system was that of a monarch who opens the sanctuary of his palace to an ambitious favourite, and crushes his realms with a rod of iron. But, if the system was partial and cruel in principle, it was bitter and destructive in its effects. The brotherhood of man was to merge, under its influence, in the brotherhood of a sanguinary sect, and the pride and selfishness of the adventurous Arab were to deal out authenticated violence to the rejected world. Piety was to be measured by slaughter, glory and immortality to be won by blood; and the "true believer," inspired with zeal to bleed or perish in the defence or propagation of his faith, was to demonstrate his holiness by the consecrated virtues of the persecutor, and the pious intolerance of the fanatic.

For a race of beings, including only, according to

* Kor. chap. ii. vol. 1. pp. 34, 38. The tenets of persecution are to be found in almost every page of the Koran.

the Koran, the spoilers who embraced, and the outcasts who rejected the creed, these doctrines were well devised, to sanction and stimulate the remorseless violence of the first, and to perpetuate the humiliation and thralldom of the last. The act of outlawry and anathema was thus proclaimed. The holy war of extermination was speedily to follow. "Unto every nation a prophet hath been sent, and when the apostle came, the matter was decided between them with equity, by the protection of the believer and the destruction of the infidel." "Say unto every nation a term is decreed, and when this term is expired, they shall not have respite for an hour, and it shall be said to the wicked"—that is to the infidel,—“taste ye the punishment of eternity; would ye receive other than the reward of that which ye have wrought*?”—But who was to ascertain the expiration of the term? Who was to unsheath the sword of vengeance? And what remained to Mahomet but to declare, according as his policy required, that the day of respite to his enemies was finally closed; and then to lead forth his tribes to the execrable glory of unsparing spoliation, and to erect the standard of Islamism amid the accumulated pillage of the living, or the ample and desecrated blood of the slain?

But it was not the immediate followers of the prophet, whose valour was to be kindled by the tenets of their master. Those tenets became a legacy of war and desolation to future times. From the æra of the Hegyra, through a long series of melancholy ages, a great portion of the world was to be converted into a region of woe and havoc. The stream

* Kor. ch. x. p. 8, and Note in loc.

of blood which began to flow when Mahomet first unsheathed his heaven-directed sword, was to be swelled by the active zeal of the Caliphs, till it spread, in a frightful inundation, over the fairest realms of the East and of the West. Nation after nation was thus subdued or depopulated under the reputed sanction of divine authority. Alledged idolatry or disbelief afforded a sufficient justification of the pious fury of the triumphant sect; and, the trump of reprobation once sounded, the devastation and slaughter through which the Moslem were to advance to a ferocious despotism, were considered as congenial with the designs of Providence, and as worthy of the glory of this world, and the felicity of the next.

It will not be easy to point out, in any other religion, perversion so gross, or impiety so presumptuous. The absurdities of Polytheism are purity and wisdom, compared with this Providence of the Koran, and these holy lessons of religious extermination. We contemplate with a smile a Vishnu veiling his glories in a ludicrous metamorphosis, or a Jupiter chastising the insolence of his sister and his wife. But we behold with different emotions the ruling deity of Islem; and we know not how sufficiently to reprobate the religion, which, opening in one page, inspiring views of the divine nature and economy, exhibits, in another, the most offensive representations of both; which describes the Almighty as alternately regulating the universe with omniscient wisdom, and co-operating with the execrable ambition and sensuality of an impostor; and which, sometimes addressing itself to the divinity as the source of all good, pretends more frequently to derive from his word an authority and sanction, not merely for

individual crime, but for the fearful fanaticism which was to continue for centuries to vex and turmoil the earth.

SECT. IV.

The Providence of the Gospel—Miraculous and Ordinary—Miraculous, for the accomplishment of the New Covenant, commencing with the birth of man, and exercising the agency of priests, patriarchs, prophets, kings, evangelists, and apostles—Ordinary, just, consistent, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—The Jew, the Christian, and the Gentile equally recognised—Probation the minister of mercy—The hope of all good men encouraged—The divine attributes displayed in correspondent action—The excellence of the whole doctrine.

FROM contemplations, affording a melancholy demonstration of the danger and mischief of a false religion, let us turn to the prospect opened by Christian wisdom, and inquire whether, or how far, the instruction may be found in the Gospel, which we have elsewhere sought for in vain.

In the desert through which we have been passing, some flowers and some fruit, vivid and salutary, may have been incidentally discovered. But the noxious weed has appeared almost every where to spring up, and the deadly shade almost every where to be spread. All has seemed but a mighty maze in which the rare and imperfect truth is perpetually overshadowed by the rank vegetation of luxuriant error. If there be any traces of order and of beauty, they are scarcely visible amid the prevailing deformities of wildness and of confusion; and man, the creator of this gloomy and repulsive scene, must be admitted to have exercised, in his work, but an understanding perpetually warped by prejudice or by passion, or

a fancy chimerical in its designs, and monstrous in its productions.

Another region opens before us. The levity of wantonness, the untamed and unregulated pruriency of fiction, the vile selfishness of imposture and of crime, are not here to solicit attention by playful or pernicious absurdity, or to court assent by the artifices of imagination, or the deceptions of fraud. The representations to which we are to direct our attention are, at least, plain, simple, and unsophisticated ; and we shall have less difficulty in solving the question, are they false and pernicious, or salutary and true ?

The Providence adverted to, or exhibited in, the Gospel, may be considered, first, as the miraculous, and, secondly, as the ordinary Providence of God ; the miraculous, constituting the economy which gradually prepared the way for the accomplishment of the new dispensation ; and the ordinary, constituting the usual administration of the divine government.

I. In the garden of Eden commenced the long series of celestial interpositions which laid the foundations, and were finally to perfect the structure, of the Gospel. We behold the innocence of man followed by the crime and misery of his fall ; but his fall is mercifully accompanied by the promise of his restoration ; and Adam is permitted to contemplate, through the darkness of sin and the glooms of time, the rising of that sun of righteousness which was to diffuse a new and more perfect light over the nations.

In consistency with this beginning, the hope of a Saviour, and the religion to be perfected by his mission, were preserved, for ages, in the bosom of a pastoral and secluded people ; and that people, through whom the sin of Adam was to be connected

with the redemption of Christ, was still to be permitted, under the tutelage of heaven, to anticipate the glories of the kingdom of Messiah.

When we contemplate this race, no longer devoted to herds and flocks, but rising into a great and numerous nation, we behold them, in the same manner, and for the same purpose, conducted and illuminated by the wisdom of Providence. Miracle after miracle was wrought to accelerate, in their favour, the purposes of heaven. The sea, which opened its waters to afford them a passage, suddenly closed upon and overwhelmed their enemies. Then succeeded the wonders of the desert, the long journeyings, the celestial sustenance, the quail, the manna, the stream gushing from the rock, the chastisements of sin, the murmuring subdued, the hope nourished, the fortitude sustained. At length, Moses was led to the summit of the mountain. There rested the glory of the presence of the Almighty. There, amid thunderings and lightnings, the divine voice was heard; and there the righteousness of the decalogue was announced, that Israel, instructed in the law of God, might be prepared to seat himself on the throne of Canaan, under the covenant of promise, and the especial favour of the Almighty.

The mighty plan which was to be perfected by the sufferings of the Cross, was still carried on. Through the medium of types and figures, as striking as they were consolatory, the Israelite was given to contemplate the dawn of that day when righteousness and peace were to kiss each other. Whether prosperity or misfortune was allotted to his nation, the trial and the blessing were equally the dispensation of heaven. Kings, and priests, and sages, and legislators, were raised up to become the instru-

ments of the designs of Providence ; and prophets, on whose lips rested the inspirations of heaven, described with holy rapture the expectation of their nation, and pictured every characteristic circumstance of his life, his death, his humiliation, and his glory.

The establishment and propagation of the religion which was preceded by these wonders, were to introduce a new series of providential interpositions. The Gospel was designed to extend its mercies to all times and to all nations ; to resist and denounce all the low and fleshly attachments of the heart ; to encourage the toils of virtue but by rewards beyond the grave ; and to preach to a world of darkness and of sin, the strictest tenets of righteousness, of holiness, of contrition, and of humiliation. And by that means was a religion so simple and so sublime, and so directly opposed to the prevailing passions and temper of men, to be promulgated and confirmed ? Not, as it might have merited, by the majesty of Kings, but by the simplicity of him who “ knew not where to lay his head ;” not by the philosophy of the wise, or the erudition of the learned, but by the lowliness and “ foolishness ” of a few despised and uneducated mechanics, with no authority but that of the cross. In opposition to all human experience, the very feebleness of agents like these was to become the means of success and of triumph ; and the weak, the unlettered, and the rude, were to discomfit the eloquence of sects and schools, and to convert the prejudices of the mighty of the earth. Where shall we seek for an adequate cause of these effects ? Who thus strengthened the impotent, and enlightened the blind ? By what support were the most scorned and ignorant of men to be-

come subduers of the world? All mortal power, all mortal wisdom would have been incompetent in this manner to triumph over the pride, the prejudices, and the interests of the world. And we cannot behold the children of poverty, and weakness, and simplicity, going forth to overthrow the altars, the tempels, and the gods of the heathen, to diffuse light and truth over idolatrous nations, and to oppose and convert the vices of thrones and realms, without exclaiming—This is not the work of man! It is the legislator of the world, who speaks by mortal lips! It is the sovereign of nature, who demonstrates, through the feebleness of his servants, his majesty, his glory, and his power!

In the visible miracles which were wrought to confirm the truth of the Gospel, we discover no less the operation of divine goodness. If Christ exercised the attributes of God, he did so, not to evince the supremacy of his power, but the benignity of his mercy. He sent not forth the lightening to consume the guilty; he did not cast down thrones and empires; he crushed not the persecutors who were plaiting for him the crown of thorns. No! He exerted his might only to bless and to save. Death surrendered its victims at his word. He rebuked the winds and the waves, and they were stilled. The demons heard him, and trembled and fled; and Lazarus, coming forth from the tomb; and the son of the nobleman of Capernaum healed of his disease; and the hungry multitude satisfied with bread in the desert, manifested at once the miraculous power, and the tender mercies, of the meek, the gracious, and the benevolent Jesus.

In this history of the divine economy for the establishment of the Gospel, every thing seems calcu-

lated to kindle the love and gratitude of mankind. The intervention, however various, is directed to the accomplishment of one great and sublime purpose. The majesty of God is placed in conjunction with his goodness, and both are interposed with sublime and undeviating consistency. We contemplate here no craft of human policy, no fraud of earthly ambition, no scheme of worldly contrivance. The interposition, in its design and effects, appears to be worthy of the Providence to which it is attributed; and the powers of darkness and of sin, as they render up their dominion, and the mercies of salvation as they triumph, afford a splendid and affecting comment on the omnipotent wisdom of the divine government.

II. Of the ordinary Providence of God the representation in the Gospel is, perhaps, equally grand and striking. No inconsistency of purpose or of will, no variation of design, no accommodation to the abject schemes and vanities of men, are attributed to the Almighty. All is good in the plan and in the operation. We are left nothing to fear from celestial mutability or caprice. It is permitted to us to look up to God as the wise and gracious disposer of events, "whose throne is established for ever and ever, and whose thoughts shall endure through all generations." "He is not," as we are told, "a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." "That which he begins he shall surely perfect." "He is consistent and holy in all his ways;" and from hence is to be deduced the certainty of those promises which are the foundation of our trust and of our security, as immortal beings. "He is the same from everlasting to everlasting;" and from hence "flows the unchanging

tenor of those laws which, from age to age, regulate the conduct of mankind*." Before such a Being we may bend with reverence and with awe; but, if his majesty oppress our thoughts, his goodness, eternal and universal, kindles the emotions of gratitude and of love. Before such a Being we may tremble and be afraid, but, while we lay our hearts at his footstool, we exclaim—"Great and marvellous are all thy works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints?"

In the Gospel we nowhere read of a principle of evil dividing the government of the world with the principle of good; or of demons and genii interposing, with fantastic levity, or resistless might, in the affairs of men. We hear, on the contrary, but the sublime annunciation of a Providence, which embraces, with unchanging goodness, the welfare of the universe, and under which there is no distinction of favour, but to vice and virtue, and no respect of persons, but in proportion as they exercise their means of knowledge in the performance of their duty. The Gentile is equally recognized with the disciple of the Gospel, as the subject and child of God; and so little reason has the Christian to hope for exclusive favour and protection, that he himself, "if he fall away," shall behold the virtuous heathen preferred before him†. Accordingly, the Gospel affords no sanction to the crime of the persecutor, and lends no authority to prostrate the

* Blair's Serm. Sermon iv. vol. 2. The sermon is eloquent, and every way worthy of its distinguished author.

† Matt. ch. viii. 2. Luke ch. xiii. 28, &c.; and Whitby in locis.

infidel at the feet of the believer. Man may teach, or may persuade. The Almighty alone is to execute the vengeance ; and universal order, and, as far as shall be consistent with universal order, individual welfare, are to flow through all times, from the unfailing source of his justice, his wisdom, and his power.

And the Providence of God which is so exercised, is to become the stay and shelter of every man, the wicked excepted. The disciple of the Gospel, who has been instructed in the majesty of the universal, and the benignity of the particular, government of the Almighty, is no longer left to despond under the occurrences of life. Time and chance are to him but powerless and passing shadows ; necessity and fate, impotent names. The events of one world are, as he is taught, indissolubly connected, in their tendencies and results, with the allotments of another. Whatever be the decree, he is authorized to consider it as equally gracious in the means and in the end ; and he is permitted to trust that, if evil descend upon him, it is designed to advance the dignity and excellence of his nature, to call forth his virtues to salutary exercise, to admonish and humiliate the wilfulness of his heart, and to promote, by trial and discipline, his final attainment of celestial blessedness. Probation, therefore, becomes, in his estimation, a messenger from heaven, wise as a teacher, and benignant, though severe, as a friend. He is no longer to consider himself as the groveling and ill-fated sufferer of the earth, but as the pupil of God, destined, under the divine government, to pass from the shadows and glooms of this transitory scene, to the glorious realities of an everlasting existence. With these conceptions, and this

trust, his passions are chastened, his hopes exalted, his resignation sustained, his views enlightened and enlarged ; and, whatever be the vicissitudes of his life of trial, the cheering voice is heard within.—
“ The Lord is king, be the people never so unquiet. The Lord is king, and the multitude of the isles may be glad thereof ! ”

In other religions the Deity, however invested with perfect attributes and supreme beatitude, appears to exercise his powers with the levity and caprice of inferior beings. But, on the subject of the divine economy, the light of truth beams forth in the doctrines of evangelical wisdom, not with a fitful and occasional, but with a steady and unvarying lustre. Uniform and consistent is the whole plan. The majesty and glory of perfection which abide in the divinity, are displayed in correspondent design and operation. Is God omniscient ? He is said to embrace, within the wide circle of his sovereignty, all existence and all times. Is he omnipotent ? He is described as controuling and governing every thing from the mightiest to the least of beings. Is he illimitable in goodness ? He diffuses, by the economy of his providence, boundless blessings over the universe. No whimsical fable intervenes to check the emotions which these just and magnificent descriptions excite ; and the perfection is perpetually the same, whether it be described as abiding in the attribute, or ministring in the operation.

From the whole of this discussion the inference is important and obvious. The poet, the pontiff, and the philosopher, even in times the most favourable to the discovery of truth, appear to have discussed the subject of Providence, only to deceive the credulity, or corrupt the belief, of those whom they

addressed. But that which, with all their erudition and talents, they were utterly unable to supply, has been accomplished by the unlettered and unpretending simplicity of Christ and of his disciples. The question, therefore, may be again asked from whence had these men the wisdom which so far transcended the powers of the most applauded sages of the earth, and which at once contributes to illuminate and exalt, and perfectly harmonizes with, the unperverted reason of man?

CHAPTER IV.

CONSOLATION.

SECT. I.

The Consolations afforded by Religion tests of its truth—Little consolation to be derived from the temple of the Greek and Roman Polytheism—Piety and virtue uncertain of the divine protection—The humble individual unworthy to occupy the care of Providence, or, if favoured by one god, exposed to the malignity of another—No certain confidence, no authenticated hope—All life an evil, suicide the remedy—The cold and comfortless doctrines of the schools—The sage of Zeno and Epicurus—Tusculan disputations—The theory and example of Cicero—Hopeless sorrow the refutation of dogmatical philosophy.

THE mixed and uncertain condition of human life, and the revolutions to which the best and wisest of men are perpetually exposed, have been, in all times, the prolific theme of melancholy but natural complaint. He who, said the sage of old, has still to encounter the changes and chances of the world, can no more be pronounced fortunate or happy, than the wrestler can be entitled to the crown of victory, before he has endured and triumphed in the contest. However the confidence of man may anticipate days and years of undisturbed felicity, his vessel is still at sea, and still assailable by the waves and tempests. In these hazards all are concerned. The afflictions of disease, the loss of fortune, the ravages of the grave, are equally the lot of the righteous and of the guilty; and the harmony of the moral world seems

to be perpetually interrupted by evils which, though less to be deplored when the punishment of sin, we cannot but lament when the allotment of virtue.

Under this mysterious constitution of things, man naturally inquires where relief is to be found, and by what means it is to be procured? He seeks for refuge in the arms of his fellow creatures, but his fellow creatures are as destitute and impotent as himself; in the enjoyments and vanities of the earth, but they are found inadequate to console the afflictions of the heart; in the reasonings of philosophy, but they are often fallacious and false, or, if true, are better calculated to prove the inutility of complaint, than to soothe the sufferings of sorrow. While the arrow rankles in the bosom, the wound is thus found to be incurable, or the balsam which is sought, is sought in vain.

In this incompetence of human or worldly succour, the sufferer beholds some blossom of hope perpetually strewed in the dust, some ripening promise blasted by unexpected disappointment, some comfort torn away by irresistible calamity. He has no resource, then, but in religion; and the religion which refuses the aid required, can have no reasonable claim to an higher origin than the wisdom of the world. If the Almighty have ever condescended to instruct mankind in the doctrines of piety or the precepts of morals, we may humbly presume that he has blended with the injunctions of wisdom the consolations of mercy. Man cannot be effectually taught how to live, if he be not adequately instructed how to suffer. Despair will triumph, where resignation is not impressed; and if fortitude, and patience, and hope, and trust, be virtues which the present state of existence indispensably requires, the system will be

imperfect and frail which affords no grounds, in the hour of sorrow, for the piety of submission, and no encouragement, in the hour of trial, to the perseverance of virtue.

The Polytheism of the Greek and Roman, however interesting and elegant in other respects, has no merit to boast as a religion of consolation. It nowhere teaches men to connect the miseries of one world with the remunerations of another, or to contemplate, in the correction required by the depravity of their nature, the wisdom and mercy by which the correction was decreed. Calamity, on the contrary, is described as the visitation of celestial malignity or caprice, or as the blind and unmerited allotment of destiny or of chance. Evil, therefore, was to be endured, not as salutary, but as unavoidable; not as happy in the result, but irresistible in the appointment*; and the devoted victim is left to struggle amid the billows, a miserable and benighted being forced along by the fury of the tempest, and casting around him in vain an exploring eye for direction and aid.

The great and illustrious, indeed, might have looked, in the period of suffering, to celestial favour; and a Codrus, a Curtius, or a Leonidas, were permitted to indulge in the vision of approving Deity. But the miseries of common life were softened by no such hope. The humble individual was unworthy of the cares of Providence†; and by whom and why he was doomed to sorrow, were questions to which his faith afforded no adequate or consolatory reply.

His afflictions were not only unsustained but often aggravated by his religion. If he was not to expe-

* Appendix, Note P. † De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. § 66.

rience the protection, he might be exposed to the injustice of his gods; and, while he was to contemplate one character persecuted by the Furies for involuntary crime, another forsaken by the caprice of the divinity, who had invaded the sanctity of his household, another visited with insanity for offences resulting from the irresistible impulse of supernatural power, he might have learned not to confide in his deities but to detest them, not to endure the revolutions of life with the patient acquiescence due to the economy of heaven, but with the hopeless despondency which sees, in that economy, neither the unerring wisdom of justice, nor the holy sympathy of mercy*.

Sometimes, perhaps, the sorrows of men were thought to awaken the compassion, and to merit the aid, of descending deity. But the compassion was useless, and the aid ineffectual. The celestial visitant, controuled by the despotism of fate, or resisted by some divinity more potent than himself, was unable to relieve the suffering which he seemed to commiserate; and the scene was illuminated by the presence of supernatural power, only to demonstrate to the supplicating votary, the vanity of his hopes, the impotence of his gods†, and the misery of his destiny.

From the moral and religious poets of Greece and Rome, we derive many evidences of the cold and unsympathizing genius of their religion, but none, of its consolatory and sustaining influence. The sorrows which they pathetically describe, may be admonished

* Appendix, Note Q.

† Even Jupiter frequently complains, in the *Iliad*, of his inability to mitigate the sufferings of his votaries.

of the necessity of submission, but are never instructed in the resignation of piety. From the miseries of life are often deduced the contradictory sentiments of voluptuousness and despair; and the evil is heightened by the colouring of fancy to excite a despondency without hope, or an epicurism without restraint. "Better would it be," said the tragedian, "to expire in infancy, or never to exist, than to be subject to the calamities by which man is encompassed; but, since calamities abound and are unavoidable, let us indulge in pleasure while we may, and devote the season to revelry and joy, which may so speedily terminate in pain and sorrow*."

Under a religion so imperfect and comfortless, the real or imaginary evil was often to provoke the madness of suicide. The illustrious defender of the freedom of his country saw no reason, when his enemies triumphed, to trust his gods; and he fell by his own hands†. The sage who, in his earlier days, had asserted the wisdom and beneficence of heaven, and applauded virtue as the felicity of man, rejected, in his calamity, the providence which he had hitherto venerated, and testified the inadequacy of his religion by his despair. It was conceived that the remedy of affliction was to be sought, not in the piety of trust; but the impiety of resistance; the victim, in his sorrow, declaimed and perished; but the deed which

* *Ædip. Colonn. Act 4.*

† Let us distinguish. Suicide prevails in Christian countries. But the crime is utterly at variance with the spirit of Christianity, and utterly opposed to its plainest injunctions. Whereas the Pagan was as little restricted as he was consoled by the genius of his religion, and his suicide was considered less as an act of guilt than of glory.

terminated his sufferings, afforded an expressive and melancholy commentary on the nature of his creed.

Even from the visions which were disclosed to him of hereafter, the Greek and Roman polytheist could derive in his calamities, neither the comforts of hope nor the stability of fortitude. To him the scenes of Elysium, however decorated by the genius of the poet, were dark and dismal. There, as he was taught to believe, the frequent voice of despondency and lamentation was heard, and, there, the brightest felicity of the most exalted spirits consisted of little more than a dull reiteration of tame and languid pleasures*. Nothing was proposed, from which affliction might derive consolation, and piety and virtue deduce encouragement. The insipid immortality which was disclosed or promised, either as the recompense of high achievement or of illustrious suffering, was rather to be awaited with submission, than anticipated with exultation, and rather to justify the vile pusillanimity of a Mæcenas†, than prompt the noble constancy of a Regulus, or of a Decius.

To such views of hereafter neither the dramatist who exemplified, nor the philosopher who declaimed on, the miseries of life, referred the sufferer for consolation. The feeble topic was despised; and those

* The Elysium of Virgil far exceeds the views which Homer has opened of another world, in colouring and design; but even in the Elysium of Virgil there is no joy, and the inhabiting spirits confess their disappointment and discontent. *Æneid. lib. vi.* See subsequent chapter, on a future state of rewards and punishment.

† The vile exclamation of Mæcenas, expressed in the vilest verses, are sufficiently known. He was an anxious, timid, and unhappy voluptuary—*cui somnus per symphonarum, ex longinquo lene resonantium, quærebatur.*

miseries were to listen, amid their tears, to frigid and fruitless discussions on the folly of complaint and the necessity of submission, instead of being exhorted to look forward to brighter and better scenes, and to seek shelter and refuge in the tranquil sanctuary of religious hope.

One of the most afflicted characters of the antient drama, has exhausted, in the detail of her sorrows, the fancy, the eloquence, and the pity of the poet. How is she consoled?—"Tears cannot restore the dead, recollection cannot bring back the past. Lamentation is, therefore, vain; and nothing remains but to forget the blessings which have been lost, and to submit with prudence to the calamity which has occurred*.

The religion, then, of the Greek and Roman affords little to strengthen the heart of afflicted man; and the dogmatists of the schools will not be found more successful in their lessons.

I. Even the philosopher who was most devoted to ease and pleasure, has been able to provide no remedy for the wounds of sorrow. In his more feeble moods, contemplating the sovereign good only in enjoyment, and the sovereign evil only in pain, he affirms that the first is to be preferred to glory and virtue, and that the last is more intolerable than infamy and crime†." In his less effeminate moments, exclaiming that he only lives who knows how to

* In the Trojan Captives of Euripides, these miserable consolations are addressed by Hecuba to her daughter Andromache. The poet had no better consolations to dictate to maternal tenderness.

† The same vicious doctrine, the natural inference from the tenet that pain was the last of evils, Tuscul. Quæst. lib. ii. § 6, was taught by many of the antient philosophers. In eo magistra vitæ philosophia tot sæcula manet. Ibid.

think*, he indulges a paradoxical austerity, of which the maxims are as impracticable, as the fundamental doctrines of his school are worthless and voluptuous. According to him, the wise man, containing in himself all possible perfections†, can triumph over the tortures of the rack, and repose with felicity amid the flames of the bull of Phalaris‡. But, while the philosopher thus dogmatizes, in the confidence of triumph, he abandons, for a silly yet hardy theory, the common sense and common convictions of mankind; and the sorrows of life, while they weep, demand from him in vain, not the impossible invulnerability with which he invests his sage, but a single motive or hope to soothe, to guide, or to cheer them.

II. The Stoic rivals the hardihood of his Epicurean brother. Pain and grief, he admits, are evils, "odious, terrible, and contrary to nature." But he also has his wise man, who, however tried by calamity, walks forth in the conscious superiority of fortitude and of wisdom, and denies the evil of that affliction which he yet acknowledges to be "terrible and odious||." In the mean time, all the rest of the

* *Ipsi sapienti vivere cogitare est.* Tusc. Quest. lib. ii. § 6.

† *Qui sapiens est,*

Et sutor bonus, et solus formosus, et idem est rex.

The poet sily laughs at the doctrine, but it was sincerely maintained by the philosopher.

‡ In Phalaris tauro si erit, dicet, "quam suave est! quam hoc non curo!" Tusc. Quæst. lib. ii. § 7. Cicero opposes to this boastful philosophy, the lamentations of the hero Philoctetes, and of the demigod Hercules.

|| O pain, said Possidonius, while suffering under the agonies of an acute disease, thou shalt not triumph. Afflict me as thou mayest, I will not acknowledge thee to be an evil. Cicer. de Nat. Deor. lib. ii. § 24. De Fin. l. v. 21.

world are to wail and weep, unconsolated, under the burden of life; and, while that is taught which it is impossible to practise, or that is boasted which it is impossible to attain, a paradoxical and fruitless lesson is the sole balsam medicated, by the physician of the portico, for the wounds of the heart*.

In a manner equally inadequate, but more eloquent and imposing, the Roman Academician struggles to fortify the mind of his pupil against the calamities of life, and the terrors of death†. He disdains to shape out a being of imaginary insensibility, and of supercilious and impossible independence; but he argues rather as a metaphysician than as a man, rather as a sophist, to silence and confute, than as a philosopher, to instruct, to comfort, and to console. The treatise in which, with such exquisite felicity of language, and sometimes, with such sublimity of moral precept, he endeavours to fortify the soul against the approach of calamity and death, affords not, perhaps, a single passage, which might direct the hope of the sufferer to a beneficent Providence, or to the future destiny of the upright. If he talk with an energy which every good man will feel, and every bad man respect, of the supreme evil of vice

* The inconsistencies of which the proud talkers of the schools of Zeno and Epicurus were perpetually guilty, are monstrous and absurd. Pain, in the opinion of the first, was not an evil, yet it was "odious, lamentable, and contrary to nature." Pain, in the opinion of the second, was the greatest of evils, yet the wise man might say, with triumphant superiority, My sufferings are delightful! *Tuscul. Disput. lib. ii. § 7.* The Stoic and the Epicurean were equally sophists, and philosophy owes them little.

† I advert to the *Tusculan Disputations*, a work which affords a striking evidence of the logic of their author. Would there were more conviction, and less confutation.

and infamy, he yet arms integrity for the combat with no sustaining motive, and no animating anticipation. To the dejections of sorrow are opposed the cold abstractions of a sceptical school; and the sophistries of philosophy are confuted by the feelings of the heart.

In the ample field in which he expatiates, the Academician scatters around him, with inexhaustible prodigality, the flowers of eloquence; but, to demonstrate the folly of the terrors against which he declaims, he falsifies the condition of human life. The world, according to him, is a gloomy theatre of calamity and sorrow; and every where are to be found the altar and the victim. On this side of the grave, therefore, the afflicted have no refuge. Death, accordingly, whether it be a change of dwelling, or the tranquillity of an eternal sleep*, cannot but be considered as the best recompense which the gods have to confer on the piety of their votaries; and if, under a system so pregnant with evil as the present life, the first of blessings would be never to exist, the second, it may with equal justice be maintained, would be speedily to die†.

But, he continues, the evils to be endured, before death may open its asylum to the sufferer, are said to be extreme, and, perhaps, intolerable. Yet habit and custom have produced resolution utterly

* Cicero speaks of the final destiny of man with the hesitation of his school—*ut aut in eternum, aut omni sensu et molestia caremus*—and he seems to contemplate, with equal satisfaction, the eternity and the extinction. *Tusculan. lib. i. § 19.*

† *Non nasci homines longe optimum esse; proximum quam primum mori.* Cicero attributes the apothegm to a certain Silenus; and he endeavours to confirm it by the authority of Euripides and Crantor. *Tusculan. Disput. lib. i. §*

superior to the assaults of pain. Behold the Spartan boy at the foot of the altar, the combatant in the arena, the thousands, recorded by history, who have braved the most afflicting trials from motives of fear, or hope, or shame, or glory. Is that which has been so often and so triumphantly sustained, beyond the fortitude or endurance of human nature? And shall we ignominiously weep and wail under trials, which so many have endured with undisturbed composure, or so many subdued with unintimidated magnanimity?

If, however, it is added, these motives be insufficient to sustain us under the assaults of fortune, let us recollect that, whatever be our lot, we have a harbour before us inaccessible to pain and sorrow. The mariner, pursued by pirates, would no longer fear, if some god were to say to him, "Plunge into the sea, your protector is at hand, the dolphin of Orion, or the steeds of Neptune, shall be ready to carry you whithersoever you will." To all men a similar language may be addressed. Are your calamities intolerable? Have you no further strength, no remaining resource? Behold! the port is open before you. Behold the asylum which is tendered by the grave*.

Thus ends, at last, the long lesson of fortitude and patience, pronounced by that eloquence on which has been lavished the admiration of antient and modern times. Among the feeble exhortations of the orator we discover the dogmatical subtilty of the sophist. Glory, shame, habit, example, a due re-

* Appendix, Note R.

spect for what is "decent and fit*," and the universal privilege of suicide, afford him grounds for those elaborate and extravagant arguments by which he essays to dry the tears of afflicted man. Meantime, the doctrines of genuine piety are rejected or unknown. Not an allusion is made to a beneficent Deity, or a presiding Providence. For the lights which might have been kindled at the altar of religion, are substituted the wandering and perishable meteors of the schools. The rhetorician declaims, but does not convince; and, whatever there may be to gratify the taste of the refined, or the erudition of the learned, there is nothing to soften suffering to patience, and to disarm the uplifted hand of despair.

The theory was soon refuted by the infirmity and lamentations of the theorist. A single calamity† was sufficient to overthrow at once the pride and vanity which had so fluently and authoritatively declaimed. The port, the asylum, the felicity, of death, were no longer contemplated, which had been before so complacently announced, as the sure and easy resource of the miserable. In every respect, the feelings of the father were to falsify the dogmas of the philosopher. He rejected the presence and counsels of his friends, secluded himself from the world in a distant solitude, brooded with exaggerating despondency over his misfortune, and exhib-

* The "decent and fit" are perpetually adverted to by the ancient philosophers; but the phrase seems to have been of very ambiguous meaning. The definition varied according to the system of the various schools, and Cicero has not condescended to explain himself on the subject.

† The death of his daughter.

bited a melancholy picture of prostrate, suffering, and hopeless destitution*. Such were the feebleness and dejection in which was to terminate the boast of academical fortitude! Such was the gulph of despair in which were to be plunged the pride, the dignity, and the wisdom of the philosopher!

SECT. II.

Consolation of the Hindu—His hope in his gods, in his priests, and in futurity—His gods capricious and contradictory, his priests selfish or tyrannical, his futurity repulsive and alarming—Suicide substituted for patience and resignation—Voluntary or compulsory death, the remedy of the sufferings of the aged—The consolations of all, feeble, and inadequate.

THE worshipper of Brama is of a temper very different from that of the more sturdy Polytheist of Greece and Rome. Unless when stimulated by fanaticism, he is the most gentle and unresisting of beings. His modes of life, the temperature of his climate, the softer structure of his frame, and, in general, the less impassioned qualities of his mind, are all favourable to that indolent tranquillity to which he aspires. He is, therefore, peculiarly disposed to yield with listless resignation to the allotments of life; and the patience, whatever it be, which is inculcated by his religion, is easily embraced by the reposing feebleness of his nature.

From the imperfect doctrines of Providence which he has been taught, he may possibly derive some

* Epist. ad Attic. 12, 18, 35, 36. He retired to the groves of the little island of Artura. In hac solitudine, says he, careo omnium colloquio; cumque mane in sylvam me abstrusi densam et asperam, nec exeo unde ante vesperam. Ep. ad Attic. xv.

alleviation of the sufferings of life. Among the various orders of his gods, if many be cruel, others may be invested with benignity and mercy. They who have visited him in wrath to-day, may be propitiated, perhaps, by his prayers and his vows, and become more favourable to-morrow. His piety may, therefore, mitigate misfortune by the cheering hope of better days; and this beam at least is given to brighten the gloom of destitution, and this consolation to rescue sorrow from despair.

Even for the relief of the sinner, under the terrors of guilt some provision has been made by the creed of Brama. With the pious and learned Bramin has been lodged the golden key of the temple of salvation; and the celestial powers of absolution are to be exercised by his wisdom or his discretion. A word, therefore, uttered by his lip, may still the compunctions of remorse; and that peace and hope are in his gift, and to be purchased by a bribe, which may lull the fears, or excite the confidence of the timid and offending votary.

The pious Hindu may also look forward with some consolatory trust to another world, and an eternal existence; and, though the doctrines in which he is instructed, on this subject, may be frequently fanciful and absurd, they may yet serve to mitigate sorrow by animating hope. That which has so often contributed to sustain the fortitude of the devotee, during long years of voluntary and savage penance, or has led his exulting zeal to the hideous sacrifice of Juggernaut*, cannot be without efficacy in the period of more ordinary trial, and may be instru-

* Human victims, as I shall hereafter have occasion to state more minutely, were annually offered up to the idol of Juggernaut.

mental in forming those features of unresisting meekness and uncomplaining patience, which distinguish and beautify the character of the Hindu.

But, of the consolations which may be thus supposed to be provided for afflicted man, by the religion of India, most, or all, are inadequate and feeble.

I. The doctrine of the providential interposition of the gods, as it is announced to the Hindu, is mingled with absurdities and errors, which must diminish or counteract its consolatory influence. Happy, indeed, is the man, who has been instructed by a wise and holy religion, to look up with confidence, amid the revolutions of time, to the equity and goodness of the Father of the universe. On him shines a light from above, illuminating his ways, and comforting his heart. But it is not for the Hindu, whose deities are discordant in attribute and design, and frequently impelled by more than the malignity and jealousy of mortal passions, to repose with healing trust on the aid and mercy of such opposite and imperfect beings. Do his gods delight in infant blood; or rejoice in the shrieks of the fanatic expiring beneath the ponderous wheels of the chariot of an idol; or complacently preside over the disgusting orgies of obscenity and stupration; or descend, in brute or human forms, upon the earth, to exercise their powers in extravagant feats, or indulge their waywardness in freakish and wanton folly? With what consolatory hope, when he contemplates divinities thus frail or impure, can he anticipate the support of celestial interposition? Can he assure himself that his offerings shall conciliate, or his petitions ascend to powers so fallible, so contradictory, and so corrupt? And, if he bend before their shrine, and load it with his oblations, shall it

not be rather to avert their wrath, than to conciliate their mercy, and to bring down their protection?

II. Even the comfort which the sinner might derive from the absolution of the priest, is weakened or restricted by the caprice with which it is conferred, or the despotism with which it is denied. The secret or detected crime of the true believer, may be redeemed and absolved. But they who have presumed, in the slightest degree, to wander from the orthodoxy of the Bramin, or have infringed the arbitrary and often whimsical privileges of a superior cast, or have lost their cast by any neglect of the rigorous observances which it enjoins, this multitude become outcasts of God and man, and are excluded for ever from the pale of Brama. The door of the Pagoda is closed against them, as against the worst and the vilest of criminals; and they are driven from the society of the faithful, as so many living pestilences, whose breath and touch are pollution and disease. If, in the fervour of devotion and zeal, they presume to enter the temples, or prostrate themselves before the images, of their gods, the discovery of the profanation excites the universal horror of priest and people. The act of impiety is deplored as the last of crimes; the most disgusting and ludicrous ceremonies are performed to restore the purity of the sacred but contaminated walls*; the offenders are publicly pronounced accursed and reprobate; and they whom instruction and mercy might have saved, or whose penitence should have been regarded as an atonement for their guilt, are deprived for ever of the joys and hopes of their religion, and

* Appendix, Note S.

set apart as a mark for the contempt, the hatred, and the persecution of mankind*.

III. Under the religion of the Hindu, little consolation has been provided for the feebleness and the sufferings of declining age. Suicide is sanctioned as the remedy of evils which should have been mitigated by the piety of hope and trust ; and they who have seen many days, are to substitute for the resignation which might have enabled them to sustain their infirmities, the impious resolution to escape from them by death.

Or, does the ancient Hindu, struggling with the instinctive fears of humanity, refuse to terminate his life in the manner permitted or required by the ritual of his faith ? He is proscribed by his religion as a burden to society, and to himself ; and the final determination of his relatives and of the priest compel the sacrifice from which his terrors avert him. He hears nothing of trust in the gods, of divine aid, or of the duty of patience. The pity, the gratitude, or the tenderness, of his family, which ought to smoothe his passage to the grave, utterly desert him. He is brutally hurried to the bank of the consecrated stream, and the shout of an unfeeling multitude testifies the moment when he is surrounded and carried off by the advancing tide. If he be seen no more, his death is accounted righteous and blessed. Or if, from the efforts of remaining strength, he be fortunate enough to reach the opposite shore, the gods, it is said, reject him as accursed ; his whole property is taken from him ; he becomes an outcast from his

* See for further details of the sufferings and degradation of the excommunicated tribes of Parias and Chandalos, chapter iv. sect. 2.

own household ; and he is contemptuously and irrecoverably expelled from the society of all good and pious Hindus.

It is not the old alone who are encouraged by their religion to terminate their miseries by death. Every man, under the pressure of infirmity and sorrow, may have legitimate recourse to the final remedy of despair. The allotment is not to be softened by a reference to the gods who decreed it, but to be evaded by a legal and meritorious suicide ; and the sufferer is informed of various modes of voluntary death, to any of which he may apply, with the soothing hope that the act may procure the pardon, and propitiate the favour, of the deity*.

IV. The consolation to be derived from the tenet of a future state, is diminished, at least, by the terrifying dogmas of purification, which constitute, perhaps, the fundamental principles of the Hindu religion. According to the decree of Brama, all human souls are to efface the stains of guilt, by a fearful diversity of punishment and migration. Sometimes they are to linger out years of discipline in the inferior forms of brutes and reptiles ; and sometimes they are to be confined within the dull and narrow circuit of vegetable or mineral prisons. The period of their chastisement, in this degraded state, is indefinite and unknown ; but, it is specifically announced, that, if, during the progress of their probation, they lapse into new sin, another series of similar purification is to commence, and no remission of punishment to be derived from the miseries that are past. Thus the ages of purgation may be prolonged and renewed, and thus the Hindu is consoled.

* Appendix, Note T.

He is to look forward to a state of future rest through a long, and frightful, and indefinite vista of intervening trial. He is to mingle and chill the anticipations of the ultimate felicity of his being with the afflicting ideas of his preparatory trials; and, whatever may be the hopes excited in his mind, by the distant and unsteady glimmerings of immortality, they are sickened and scared by the terror of transmigrations, to be productive he knows not of what misery, and to be continued he knows not how long*.

The Hindu, then, has little reason to boast of the ambiguous or feeble consolation provided by his religion for the mitigation of calamity. If he be urged to terminate his life and sorrows together, he is but told there is no remedy for his sufferings but death. If he refer to his gods, he finds little reason to rely on the wisdom and goodness of such whimsical and discordant powers. If he look to the absolution of his priest, he knows not how speedily it may be withdrawn from him by tyranny or caprice, and how soon he may be numbered with the excommunicated multitude. If he be reminded of his future residence with Brama in the regions of Suttul, he is not to forget how many ages of purgation he may have to endure in the form of a reptile, a mineral, or a plant. The promises in which he trusts, are blended with decrees at which he shudders. He is the most gentle of beings. His religion is the most unpitying and the most comfortless of creeds.

* Voyage de Sonnerat, tom. ii. pp. 192, 200. Bagvhat-Geeta, pp. 39, 115. Bernier, tom. ii. p. 193. Dow's Dissertat. p. 43. Sir William Jones on the Gods of India, Italy, and Greece. Cheval. Ramsay. Princip. Nat. and Revealed Religion, vol. i. p. 110.

SECT. III.

The Mussulman more happy in the consolatory doctrines of his religion—Celestial favour the sure reward of his prowess or his fanaticism—The smiling pleasures of his paradise—His predestinated security—Moral influence of the consolations thus tendered—Presumption of the faithful, persecution of the infidel, endurance without effort, acquiescence without piety—The whole doctrine insulting to God, and injurious to man.

IT was, in every respect, nonsistent with the ambitious views of the prophet of Mecca, to attach men to his creed by the imposing artifices of promise and of hope. His followers were to be tempted to fight and bleed for the establishment of his power, to raise and defend the standard of the Koran amidst infidel and hostile nations, and to go forth, with exterminating zeal and exclusive piety, to subvert the religions and the empires of the earth. To kindle this rage of conquest and this fury of crusade, motives proportionally powerful were to be announced; and Mahomet, it must be allowed, has not failed, in this respect, to demonstrate his usual skill in adapting his creed to the circumstances in which he was placed, and the people whom he was to govern.

To the wavering believer, and to the sturdy infidel, he dealt forth all the terrors with which religious fiction supplied him: They were to be especially visited in this world with the wrath of God, and in the grave with the judgment of Israfil, and the punishment of the iron mace*. A grim and terrific hell was to display, at the bidding of the prophet, its auxiliary

* I have already alluded to the trial of the sepulchre. Chap. ii. sect. 3.

terrors, and the retribution which commenced here, was to be carried on, hereafter, through endless ages, and with unsparing vengeance.

But there is scarcely a chapter in the Koran which does not open views of the interpositions of Providence, favourable, in the highest degree, to the holy Mussulman, and admirably calculated to inflame his courage, and to sustain his perseverance. Every thing is ascribed to the will and wisdom of Deity; but the true believer alone is to enjoy his especial protection. Go forth, says the Koran to its disciples, go forth without fear of the calamities of life, or the perils of battle. Nothing shall be endured in the cause of truth, without abundant recompense. On the believer descends the peculiar favour of the Almighty. Whatever be the darkness of his lot, it shall in due time be enlightened by beams from heaven. He may be tried, but the mercy which is above watches over him. He may suffer, but his sufferings shall terminate in glory.

While the children of Islem are instructed, in this manner, to look up to protecting deity, they are further supported by consolations brought from another world. Faith opens to them the scenes of future remuneration and joy. For them is prepared a sensual and smiling paradise, with its unfailing flowers, its cooling streams, and its black-eyed virgins. Immortal treasures are to be strewed at their feet, ineffable harmonies are to soothe their ears, and their appetites are to be perpetually solicited and renewed by the tempting pleasures of unsatiating banquets. These promises issue from no frail and fallible source. They are sanctioned by the express authority of God, and are announced by the lips of the angelic Gabriel, to kindle the zeal, and to confirm the confidence, *of the disciples of the prophet.*

The voice of predestination was also to be heard, to encourage and to heighten the fortitude of the faithful. If the forehead of the infidel were marked with the seal of eternal reprobation, the true believer was pre-ordained the favourite and the elect of heaven. Until the period should arrive which had been decreed by the fore counsels of God, he was to walk with equal safety among friends and foes. Plague, famine, and the sword, were not to reach him. The power of man was inadequate to shorten his days by a single moment; and he was to prosecute his journey through life with the tranquillity afforded by the conviction that a shield of adamant was held before him by unearthly hands, which no wandering arrow could penetrate, and no force could remove.

I. But the consolation provided by the Koran, bears the indelible marks of a partial, narrow, and cruel system. Pestilence, and war, and miracles of wrath, were to afflict the rest of mankind; and all beyond the circle circumscribed by the wand of Mahomet, were denounced as unholy and excommunicated outcasts. In the mean time, the whole treasure of celestial mercy was lavished on a few barbarous and fanatical tribes. The rejected infidel was nothing, the Arab was every thing; especially the Arab reeking with the blood of those who had refused to fall down before the standard of Islam. That paternal blessing, which, it might be supposed, the Father of the universe would extend to the whole family of nature, was thus denied to the species, and reserved for the individual; and the consolation which was so medicated by the craft of the prophet, was at once to elevate the hopes and presumption of the believer, and kindle in him the zeal of the fanatic, *and the cruelty of the persecutor.*

II. Even for the believers themselves, the Koran provides an unequal fund of consolatory hope. The retired and peaceful disciple is not, indeed, unworthy of divine support in the period of trial, and his calm, unobtrusive, and gentle, virtues, may bring down upon him the blessing of heaven. But, for the warlike Mussulman, who toils and triumphs for his creed, is reserved the more especial and more ample protection of the Almighty. He slays not an idolater without the assurance of recompense; and his acts of blood, attesting a brighter purity, and a more zealous faith, are registered above, as so many infallible claims to celestial benediction. Next to the warrior, in the divine estimate, stand those whose fasts, whose pilgrimages, and whose prayers, have been accurately performed. For them the abstinence of Ramadân, the ceremonies of the Caaba, and the formal strictness of their periodical devotions, are so many merits, precious in the eyes of God, and worthy of the interposition and favour of his benignity. They are found weighty in the balance, not so much for domestic or social virtue, as for compliance with injunctions and forms which have no reference to either; and the Deity, first described as extending his sanction, and tendering his rewards, to bloodshed, turbulence, and desolation, is afterwards extolled as the partial friend of ceremonial formality, or wandering fanaticism. But the lesson had its fruits. Votaries were increased. Mecca rejoiced in the annual crowds of zealots by whose oblations she was enriched; while the military fervour was lighted up and diffused, which was to sustain so high a part in the drama of Islem, and to proceed from the subjugation of towns and tribes, to

the overthrow or conversion of the greatest empires of the world.

III. The doctrine, too, which sheltered the Musulman under the shield of Predestination, was mischievous both in a moral and intellectual view. To inform the sufferer, that his trials have been decreed from the beginning of things, and, therefore, are to be endured without the possibility of diminishing or evading them, might rather augment the evil, than afford the consolation. That which cannot be remedied must, indeed, be borne ; but the view which awakens no hope, can fortify no patience. What can piety and prayer avail under irremediable destitution ; and by what can resignation be sustained which can borrow no aid from piety and prayer ? Every thing is, comparatively, hopeless, cheerless, and comfortless. The storm issues forth by the law of a predestiny coeval with the commencement of things ; but there is no intimation of the purity of the atmosphere which it is to restore, or the disease and pestilence which it is to disperse ; and the mighty and terrific voice which exclaims to the sufferer, " It is your destiny ! " strikes sadly and fearfully upon the heart, and calls forth, not so much the trust that cheers, as the despondency and dismay which aggravate, adversity.

The general character of the disciple of the Koran, affords reason for believing that these inferences are neither exaggerated nor unjust. In the hour of suffering, he appears to be rather acquiescent from necessity, than resigned from principle. He endures without effort, because he believes that his efforts cannot avail. Armies are swept away by the fury of the conqueror ; or the plague, rushing forth from the marshes of Syria or of Egypt, depopulates his cities

and his realms ; but he fancies that the destroying angel will not be averted by the supplications or efforts of man ; and he, therefore, submits to his allotment with that languid and torpid acquiescence which so often distinguishes his character, and which, however it may be thought to attest the sincerity of his faith, contributes to augment the number of his calamities.

Under the influence of persuasions like these, indeed, the human mind, in the East, seems to have lost a considerable portion of its capacities and powers. That which destroys the free agency of man, must render the efforts of reason useless, restrain and discourage the exercise of industry, chill the fires and check the flight of fancy and genius, derogate from the dignity of human nature, and contribute to substitute for that active and persevering energy, which may prevent or mitigate misfortune, a passiveness without piety, and a submission without resignation. The disciple of the Koran, accordingly, referring events to the absolute pre-ordinance of God, regards every attempt to change or to remedy the common course of things, as a crime not far removed from rebellion against the established and unalterable laws of the Almighty. He sees, with a dull and torpid acquiescence, parents, children, and friends, swept away by disease ; and, while the plague destroys thousands and tens of thousands in his streets, he looks on the ravage with languid and lifeless insensibility, till the Almighty please to suspend the work of desolation and of death*.

* White's Bampton Lect. Sermon ix. and part 1. All intelligent writers on the subject have expressed similar opinions ; and the philosophic Montesquieu attributes the rapid decline of the empire

From this view it may appear that the consolations to be derived from the Koran, are, in many respects, not only insufficient to strengthen the heart, but calculated to enfeeble and to deprave it. Founded on doctrines which equally misrepresent the attributes and providence of God, and depress and sicken the energies of man, they are utterly at variance with those views which genuine religion never fails to open on the mind of the sufferer, and which to the vigour that may remedy, add the patience and trust which always mitigate, misfortune. The acquiescence of indolence, the dull inactivity of a sluggish and hopeless submission, the torpid resignation which may spring from the conviction of predestinated necessity, are the fruits which the suffering disciple of the prophet may gather from his creed. Exertion is repressed as useless crime, or impious rebellion, where it should have been quickened by a generous faith, and a holy hope. The believer is separated from mankind by the narrow and exclusive partiality of the tenets which are designed to soften his calamity; and, however the doctrines which attribute to the warriors of Islem the peculiar favour of heaven, may stimulate the zeal and valour of the fanatic; they falsify and profane, because they limit, the paternal goodness of the Almighty; and they contract, and chill, and localize, the sentiments of humanity, because they encourage and legitimate the violence of war, and because they teach the votary of the Koran to regard all mankind, beyond the circle of his own heaven-enlightened sect, as

of the Mussulman to the operation of that very principle of Predestination, by the influence of which it was accelerated in its progress, and established in its power.

marked with the indelible seal of reprobation, and devoted to the temporal and eternal wrath of the Almighty.

SECT. IV.

The Gospel a religion throughout of sympathy and compassion—The object of trial—Its reference to the present correction and future welfare of the sufferer—All things work together for the good of those who love God—The consequent hope and trust of the upright—Further consolations deduced from the consideration of the divine character—"He spared not his own son"—Inference—Even the guilty invited to unite with the household of God, and to partake of the blessing of the divine favour—The language of Christ, "Come unto me"—Examples of forgiveness and acceptance—The woman caught in adultery—The woman who anointed the feet of Christ with ointment—Christian consolation completed by views of hereafter—The courage, the patience, and the constancy kindled in the Apostles by these doctrines—Their general tendency—Recapitulation.

"WE have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*." In this manner is the legislator of the Gospel described; and the religion which emanated from such a personage, may naturally be expected to exhibit clear and distinctive marks of the kindness and sympathy which are thus said to illustrate his character. Accordingly, however we may primarily look to that religion for wise precept and authoritative injunction, we find that it is accommodated, with the utmost tenderness, to the distressed condition of mankind. The same penetrating voice, which prescribes the necessity of active virtue, and

* Heb. iv. 15.

denounces negative virtue as guilt*, assumes, when addressing itself to the children of affliction, the tone and language of commiseration and comfort.

Partial evil, however generated, has been described as essential to the order and harmony of the universe†. But, while to this order the interests of individuals were obliged to bend, the individuals who suffered have been provided, neither by the suggestions of antient wisdom nor modern philosophy, with any effectual consolation; and they are to endure, as necessary or unavoidable, what they should have been taught to consider as salutary and wise.

More noble views and more generous doctrines are every where afforded by the Gospel. That which may be required for the maintenance of general order, is not ordained to overwhelm the individual by irresistible evil, but to chastise and improve him by salutary probation. All things are said to work together for the good of those who love God‡. “He who sitteth upon the throne,” knows how to accomplish his ends, without sacrificing the real welfare of any good man; and “the life of the upright is a system complete within itself, where every event that happens is a link in that great chain of causes which is appointed for carrying on his improvement and felicity, as well as for promoting the welfare and harmony of the whole||.” The particular,

* See the parables of the barren fig tree, of the unprofitable servant, and of the rejected virgins.

† An old doctrine, repeated by Bolingbroke to Pope. The dry and meagre form embraced by the philosopher is invested with a mantle of gold by the poet.

‡ Epist. Hebrews, ch. viii. v. 38.

|| Blair's Serm. vol. v. serm. 4. This is the philosophy of Christianity:

therefore, is not lost in the universal; and the government which watches over and preserves all, equally watches over and preserves each. It is by no ambiguous reasoning, and no elaborate subtilty, that man is here attempted to be consoled. The doctrine is emphatically announced. The noblest ideas which we can conceive of the goodness of God, are verified by the plan of Providence which is thus revealed. The fountain appears to be opened by divine mercy, and the copious and innumerable streams which issue forth, are intended to become medicinal to the souls and sorrows of the just.

Of the just!—To the hardened sinner no encouragement is given. He is rejected with indignation; and left to feed on the fruits of his ways, which are dust and ashes. But they who seek the approbation of God, by observing his laws, and imitating his character, are “sealed unto the day of redemption.” Be pure and holy, says the Gospel, and be confident and happy. If, “to the guilty the Almighty giveth sore travail to labour and lay up, he giveth to him that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy*!”

When the good man recollects the order of things which is thus established, the most sublime and cheering views open on his mind. He is not placed under the capricious empire of time and chance; it is not under the blind dominion of necessity that he is to struggle with events; he has not to look up to conflicting deities, who shower down misfortunes or blessings upon the sons of men with capricious partiality. Whatever, from the beginning to the end

* Eccles. ch. ii. v. 26. The spirit of these words, if not the letter, is adopted in its fullest meaning by the Gospel.

of his days, be the circumstances of his lot, the care of heaven is to convert all into a means of his improvement and felicity. There is, he knows, no vain and useless event, no unwise and unjust infliction. To his present or future welfare he is taught to trust that all the apparent discordances or real calamities which mingle in his life are to tend. The lightning and the tempest which rage around him, may smite but not destroy ; and, however he bend beneath the storm, " his leaf shall not wither, and, like a tree planted by the water side, he shall bring forth his fruit in due season *."

It is true that, " if need be, the righteous may be left for a season in heaviness †". The Almighty is not miraculously to save their harvest from the mildew or the blight, nor to turn aside the arrow of death from their relatives and friends, nor always to avert the hostility with which they may be pursued by the wicked. But the sorrows which overwhelm crime, are rendered corrective and salutary to virtue. The upright trust, and are authorized to trust, that the evil shall work for their good. They recognize in the storm and in the cloud the power and mercy which shall, sooner or later, hush the storm into peace, and touch the cloud into light and glory. They are encouraged to believe that the seeds which are sown in tears, shall, one day, ripen beneath the sun-shine of heaven, and yield to them the fruits of peace and joy. With these sentiments calamity is found to minister unto blessedness. Misfortune, instead of being met with hopeless despondency or listless imbecility, exercises the fortitude, the piety, and the trust of the sufferer. The blessing for which

* Psalm i. 3.

† 1st Peter, i. 6.

trial was ordained is gradually unfolded and felt; and the probation affords a new proof of the love and wisdom of the Almighty. .

To the good man, then, whatever be his trial, a sanctuary is opened by Christian hope, to which he can always retire. Instead of being told, like the Stoic, that virtue is to render him insensible to evil, he soothes himself with the conviction that evil is necessary to his discipline and his happiness. Instead of being instructed, like the Epicurean, that wisdom may convert the flame and the rack into instruments of delight, he is directed, in the hour of calamity, to repose on the bosom of his father and his God, and to soften sorrow by hope. In a word, deriving strength and trust from the promises of the Gospel, he dwells at all times under the shelter of celestial protection; and "if the floods lift up their voice, yea, if they lift up their waves," he may whisper to himself, with humble, but steadfast faith, "The Lord is higher and mightier than the voice of many waters, yea, than the waters of the sea; my heart, therefore, is strong, my heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

The character of God, as it is represented in the Gospel, is calculated to heighten and to augment these consolations. He is not, as the Almighty is exhibited in other religions, a capricious tyrant sporting in blood, nor a solitary being indolently secluding himself in the depths of space, and preferring the slumbers of eternal repose, to the glory of guiding and governing the movements of the universe. The religion of Christ invests him with all the perfection of purity and love, and we behold in Him the wise and gracious arbiter of events, who delights to store the treasures of his mercy in the

bosom of the humble, to dry up the tears of the orphan and the widow, to open the tabernacle of peace to the wounded and wearied spirit, to strengthen the weak, protect the destitute, comfort the miserable, and redress the oppressed. To such a Deity, well may the afflicted and forlorn address their supplications. If they be smitten they may assure themselves that his mercies are with them. If they suffer as men, they may adore and triumph as Christians, for they may trust that the spirit which shall give them rest, is about their bed and about their path.

These persuasions, so salutary and sublime, are encouraged in the children of trial, not merely by precept, but by fact. "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—The Son of God was delivered up for us under every circumstance which might heighten the mercies of the oblation. After descending from his glory, he was to endure, in the accomplishment of his mission, a long series of scorn, injustice, oppression, and sorrow; and the agony of the garden, the insults of the hall of Pilate, and the ignominy and anguish of the cross, rendered yet more afflicting by the impenitence, impiety, and ingratitude of those whom he came to save, were to close a life which had been devoted to the instruction, the sanctification, and the redemption of the world. Is such a sacrifice a clear and an irrefutable manifestation of the unbounded beneficence of God to man? If so, the consolation of the miserable is complete. He who thus loved the world, will not unnecessarily afflict the children of men; he who thus accomplished the salvation of the sinner, by the redeeming mercy which provided the atonement for sin will not with,

draw himself from his people in the day of trouble; he who thus delivered up his Son for us all, "how shall he not with him also freely give us all things*?" The faith which admits the fact, cannot but embrace the inference; and the professors of the Gospel, while they contemplate this miracle of celestial goodness, may well trust that "God is in truth a sun and a shield, giving grace and glory, and withholding no good thing from those who walk uprightly;" and that, "if they first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all things shall be added unto them," which their real welfare as rational and immortal beings may require.

It is remarkable that, while the Gospel thus sanctions and sanctifies the trust and hope of the children of God, the guilty themselves, instead of being cast out to despair, are affectionately invited to return from the evil of their ways, and participate the blessings of the Almighty. God does not wish for the death even of those who rebel against him, "but rather that they should turn from their offences and live." The anathema which rests upon crime may be removed by penitence; and every where does the gracious and compassionate benevolence of Christianity tender to the contrite sinner instruction, mercy, and acceptance. "Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest†." Ye who are overwhelmed and dejected with the consciousness of sin; ye who tremble under the melancholy foreboding of future punishment, and look up in alarm and apprehension to an incensed and avenging God, "come unto me!" I offer relief and life. I hold out the

* Romans, ch. viii. v. 32.

† Matt. ch. xi. v. 28.

signal of forgiveness, the olive branch of peace. Guilty though you be, and aliens from God, I open to you the way of reconciliation. Are you repentant? Behold your Saviour. Are you sinking beneath the burden of your sins? Behold the Mediator who knoweth and pitieth your infirmities. Would you henceforth walk in newness of life? Behold your guide. He who descended from heaven to enlighten and regenerate the world, accepts your contrition as a precious sacrifice; and the defective efficacy of your sorrows and your prayers to blot out your misdeeds, shall be perfected to your salvation by the redeeming blood of the Son of Man.

The instances afforded by the conduct of Christ, of this gracious and merciful compassion to the contrite criminal, are various, beautiful, and affecting. Let us advert to two of them.

When the unhappy woman "who was taken in adultery," was brought forth by the people, there was neither pity nor mercy to be found in the surrounding multitude. On every side was heard the voice of turbulent accusation and reproach; and the anguish of the accused was imbibed by the scorn and insults of the accusers. In the midst of this tumultuous and vindictive crowd, and while they reiterated the denunciations of the law of Moses against the criminal*, "Christ stooped down and wrote with his finger on the sand, as though he heard them not; and when they continued asking him, he lift himself up and said—What?—The law of Moses is just, the sinner is convicted, let her die the death?

* The punishment was strangling for a married woman, and death by stoning for an espoused one. Levit. ch. xx. v. 10; Deut. ch. xxii. v. 23.

—No!—But, “he that is without sin amongst you let him cast the first stone at her.” Thus spoke the lips of mercy; and “they who heard the words, “being convicted by their own consciences, went “out one by one, and Jesus was left alone, and the “woman standing in the midst.” Then Jesus turned to the woman, and said, “Woman, where are thy “accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, “no man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, neither “do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more*.”

I do not expatiate on this story. I do not dwell on that union of wisdom and mercy which, pardoning the crime, was to promote the reformation of the criminal. The history furnishes its own comment. It demonstrates the graciousness and sympathy of Christ, by facts interesting and intelligible to every good heart. We behold compassion in action; but wisdom applauds and justifies the act. We behold the offender forgiven, but virtue rejoices to receive a new disciple; and pardon, while it absolves the crime, confirms the reformation. “Go, and sin no more.”

The same gracious benignity was exercised on another occasion, equally interesting and affecting. Christ had entered into the house of one of the Pharisees to eat with him, “and a woman of the city “who was a sinner, stood behind him weeping, “and began to wash his feet with her tears, and did “wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed “his feet, and anointed them with ointment.” The Pharisee, who seems to have possessed all the insolent pride of his sect, beheld the unhappy penitent with disdain; “and he spake within himself, saying, “this man, if he were a prophet, would have known

* Appendix, Note V.

“ who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.” But Christ penetrated his thoughts, and corrected him by a parable of great simplicity and beauty. “ There was a creditor who had two debtors. The one owed him five hundred pence, the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he forgave them both. Tell me, now, said Christ, which of these will love him most? The Pharisee, answered, and said, I suppose he to whom he forgave most. And he said to him, thou hast answered rightly. Then Jesus said unto Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house; thou gavest me no water for my feet; thou didst not anoint my head with ointment; thou gavest me no kiss: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and kissed them, and anointed them with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much. And he said unto her, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace*.”

In this story there is a contrast of character and of action, which relieves, and heightens, and moralizes, the whole scene. We condemn with indignation the secret judgment of pharisaical rigour, and contemplate with compassion the tears and anguish of prostrate penitence. But, when we behold the Son of God, rebuking the evil spirit of intemperate condemnation, turning with celestial pity and complacency to the woman, accepting her good offices, recording her faith, compassionating her sorrows, forgiving her offences, what emotions of love and reverence do we not feel, and what homage

* Luke, ch. vii.

does not the heart pay to him who thus tendered encouragement to reformation of life, and thus afforded consolation to humiliated and repentant sin?

If there be a pang of bitterness, it is that which the sinner must feel in the hour of gloom and of recollection. Have I neglected and despised the most solemn and sacred obligations of duty? Have the laws of heaven, which require my obedience, been insulted by my rebellion? What account shall I be able to give of myself at the tribunal of eternal and immutable justice? How shall I, polluted as I am by crime, and self-condemned, expect to find acceptance and favour with the Almighty? These questions, which sooner or later the conscience of the sinner must whisper within, cannot but overwhelm his heart with dismay, and leave him, if he have no resource but in himself, without remedy and without hope. But let him consider the woman who is here pardoned, and the judge who pardons, and he will no longer despair. He will be instructed where the forgiving and atoning mercy is to be found; and, instead of sinking beneath the burden of fear and sin, and anticipating the period of punishment and woe, he will be reminded of the efficacy of a broken and contrite heart; he will be encouraged to return to God; and his spirit, repentant, regenerated, and renewed, may learn to elevate its trust to heaven, and to repose, with tranquil but humble confidence, in the bosom of divine compassion.

Every where in the Gospel is this lesson announced to the repentant sinner; but it deserves particularly to be noticed, that the pious trust which it is his consolation and comfort to be permitted to cherish, is to him as an obligation fulfilled and a duty obeyed. Faith and charity are indispensable, but

to faith and charity must be added hope. In other words, the follower of Christ must not despair. He is to trust, on the contrary, that every tear of contrition which he sheds, and every aspiration of faith which ascends from his heart, possesses, in the sight of God, a holy, sacrificial, and atoning efficacy. In the divine justice which weighs his thoughts and his ways, is mingled, as he is instructed, the goodness that is willing to embrace the returning criminal, and the compassion that delights to tender the conditions of pardon; and the voice of promise perpetually tells him, that the portal of the sanctuary is open for his reception, and that nothing but the impenitence and obstinacy of guilt can close it against him. Thus it is that a ray of light and hope is let in upon the darkness of his soul, that a pillar of fire is lighted up for him in the desert, to direct his way towards the Canaan of rest, and that the admonition of celestial mercy is heard—"Wherefore
" should ye spend your money for that which is not
" bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth
" not? Approach the fountains of living water which
" are opened for you, and drink and live. Fear not,
" for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am
" thy God."

These however, though of so much efficacy, are not the sole consolations prepared for afflicted man, by the wisdom and mercy of the new dispensation. The foundations of the divine government are, indeed, laid in truth and equity, and the penitent sinner is not excluded from the divine compassion. But wherever there is man, tears are to be shed; and the people of God are to participate, like the rest of the world, the evils which attend the pilgrimage of life, and to endure, for their hour, the allotted

portion of painful and necessary discipline. They are, therefore, told, that this world is not their all. They are permitted to look forward to those regions where they shall receive from the hand of the Almighty their eternal recompence; and they are encouraged "to reckon," with the apostle, "that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed, and that the white palms, the robes, and the sceptres of the just, shall be their portion for ever and ever*." The vista of their sorrows thus opens on the scene of their glory. They have to rest their hope of hereafter on no speculations of a vain, a doubtful, and a doubting philosophy, but on the unhesitating assurance of Him "who brought life and immortality to light;" and they may apply to the wounds of the heart inflicted by the calamities of one world, the healing balsam afforded by the authorized anticipations of another.

Let the good man, now, enumerate all his evils. He is smitten and cast down. Infirmity and disease prey upon his declining years. The eyes which had been accustomed to sparkle with joy as he approached, are closed in death; the parental hands, which had been so often raised to bless him, moulder in the dust; and all those in whose welfare he more especially rejoiced, and for whom he most desired to live, have gone to their long homes. But, lo! the period of tears is hastening away. The scene spreads out before him, where calamity and grief shall be no more. Already he beholds the glooms which rest upon his paths gradually clearing up. Those whom he hath lost are about to be restored; that which

* Romans viii. 18.

he has suffered is about to be recompensed. Let me; then, he may whisper to himself, endure but a little longer, and all shall be well. From the ashes of apparent deformity and confusion, shall spring up the perfection of order and beauty. The tomb shall become the passage to immortality, and the calamities of the present shall be remembered only to heighten the felicities of the future.

While the Apostles, after their divine Master, inculcated doctrines like these, they were prepared to demonstrate their influence and their efficacy. Behold those heroic sufferers, in chains, smitten, cast down, maligned, and persecuted. Do they shrink? Do they repine? Do they tremble? Strengthened, on the contrary, by the consolations of faith and hope which they tendered to others, they exult in the cross they bear, and triumph in the sufferings inflicted, by the permission of God, for the augmentation of their glory. "No!"—exclaims Saint Paul, "though I be sacrificed upon the oblation and service of your faith, I congratulate you all; on the same account do ye rejoice and congratulate me*." And what occasion had this holy man to rejoice? Did he expect fame, or riches, or dignities, or triumphs? Or were there not before him, disgraces, stripes, ignominies, the glooms of a prison, the condemnation of unjust judges, the crown of martyrdom? But he could endure all with resignation, for he was sustained by the spirit of Evangelical hope, not by the poor pretences of human philosophy; by that "spirit which had joy in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions for Christ's sake;" by that spirit which, "being justified by faith, had peace

* Philipp. ii. 17, 18.

“ with God, and gloried in tribulation, knowing that
“ tribulation worketh patience, and patience expe-
“ rience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not
“ ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad
“ in our hearts*.”

The disciple of Christ, then, is afforded all the consolations which may best brighten the glooms of trial. He is not a dependent solely on his own strength; he has not his portion solely in this world; there is one above him who watches ever his path, and listens to his supplications; his afflictions are for trial, and his trial for glory; whatever be his infirmities, the voice of mediation pleads for him before the throne of grace; and the redeeming mercy, which bore his sins on the cross, has accomplished his salvation. Here, therefore, he rests. While he recognises, in the griefs which beset him, the decree of heaven, he beholds the arm of might stretched forth to guide and to save him; and he submits himself and his concerns with humble, but confiding truth, to the care of that paternal Being who thus looks down upon him in amity and in mercy.

And, now, let the religion of Greece, of Rome, of Hindostan, and of Mecca, collect and bring forth all the best and brightest consolations which they have prepared for their disciples. What are the hopes which they authenticate, the prospects which they unfold, the aids which they afford, the mercies which they announce, the divine economy which they proclaim, compared with those disclosed, in a manner so effective and so beautiful, by evangelical wisdom? On one side, we contemplate a providence

* 1 Thess. i. 6; Rom. v.

often capricious and unjust ; a deity often negligent of human sufferings, and cruel and partial in his decrees ; an immortality almost without joy, or tendered only to awaken the fury of fanaticism and of persecution ; in a word, motives, frail, earthly, feeble, unfounded, or corrupt. On the other, we behold a God supreme in attribute, gracious in government, parental in correction, boundless in love ; a futurity, where all wrong shall be redressed, all tears shall be wiped away, all righteousness, and all that is endured for righteousness sake, shall be abundantly recompensed ; a Redeemer encircled with the beams of benevolence and of compassion, remembering and pitying the infirmities of man, and extending his arms to embrace, not a sect, a city, or a realm, but all nations, kindreds and tongues, not the pure and upright alone, who bring to his altar the oblation of obedience and of love, but the guilty, who approach him only with the tear and the sigh of the contrite heart. The religions which are thus contrasted we presume not to compare ; but, while we are compelled to admit the utter insufficiency of human creeds, in their consolatory influence, let it not be denied, that the Gospel remedies the defect in a manner adequate to the consolation of afflicted man, and, if we may so speak, worthy of the goodness and wisdom of that God by whom it claims to be inspired.

CHAPTER V.

DEVOTION.

SECT. I.

Spirit of the Greek and Roman devotion—External observances. Imposing forms—Vicious Gods—Impious worship—Minute rites and rules of the national ritual—Monstrous and sanguinary oblations—Ver sacrum—Reverence of outward signs—Superstitious piety—Corrupt and corrupting ceremonies—Female ministrants of the temples—Magic—Evocation—Sacrifice—The whole worship sanctioned by the magistrate and the priest—The service political and mischievous, and calculated to delude and corrupt the people.

THE forms of worship adopted by nations or individuals, are intimately connected with morals and manners. Their influence may be modified by the civil regulations of policy and of law ; but it will be only modified. The disposition of the worshipper will still be governed by the character of the worship. The qualities which are the objects of devotion, naturally become those of imitation ; and all history warrants the opinion, that our judgments of man, whether in his civil or individual state, may safely be determined by the temper, the tendency, and the ceremonies of his worship.

The worship, then, prescribed by any religion, is not to be considered merely in its reference to Deity. It becomes a test of the utility and wisdom of the religion itself ; and in the purity or impurity of the

stream we may detect the qualities of the fountain from which it flows.

It would be easy to select from the volumes of Greek and Roman antiquity, various passages, on the subject of devotion, of great excellence and beauty. As every heart was open to the divine inspection, every aspiration, it was said, was instantly detected in its most secret motives. The gods listened to no idle or hypocritical prayer. They grant not what is asked, but what is right. It is wise to solicit their favour and support, but the presumption of the votary is not to prescribe the time or the manner of the intervention*. Nor are the gods to be bribed by splendid oblations. When the Athenian sarcastically complained to the oracle of Ammon, that the favour of gods had been purchased by the contemptible offerings of the Lacedemonians, the Oracle replied, that the most costly sacrifices of Athenian ostentation were less acceptable than the cheap and simple oblations of Spartan piety†. And when the Thessalonian, in the pride of his magnificence and pomp, devoted to the gods an hundred oxen with gilded horns; and the humble sincerity of the citizen of Hermione tendered his little handful of flowers; it was declared by the voice of the presiding deity, that the splendid hecatomb of vanity was less grateful to heaven, than the blossoms laid upon the altar by upright poverty‡.

Even the external observances of Grecian piety

* See the concluding lines of the Tenth Satyr of Juvenal. They are beautiful, but surpassed by the Christian paraphrase of Johnson.

† Plato in Alcibiad.

‡ Porohyr. de Abtinent. lib. i. § 15.

often afforded a beautiful and interesting spectacle. The extensive area before the temple, and the noble porticoes which generally surrounded it, were crowded by a devout and zealous multitude. The priests, or priestesses, in splendid garbs, appeared, at a little distance, in the vestibule, at the foot of the altar. After a solemn pause, one of the subordinate ministers, in order to excite the attention of the people, demanded, "Who are they who compose this assembly?" and a universal response was returned, "Upright and pious citizens." The officiating priest then slowly advanced, and in a distinct and awful voice, exhorted the congregation "to offer up their prayers, and to supplicate the gods." Prayers, adapted to the occasion, were next recited by the priest; or hymns, in which the divine genius of the poet had celebrated the majesty of the gods, were chanted, by a chorus of youths and virgins, with such sweet and affecting melody, as frequently excited the tears and kindled the admiration and enthusiasm of the auditory*.

Yet whatever may have been the excellence or utility of these or similar observances, the superstition of the Greek and Roman faith authorized persuasions more generally, which misdirected and

* Plato de Legib. lib. vii. tom. 2. p. 800. In the *Carmen Seculare* of Horace, the chorus of youths and virgins is occasionally alternate, and occasionally united. The poet opens his subject with great sublimity, and drives from the precincts of the temple the vulgar and the profane—

Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.
Favete linguis: carmina non prius
Audita musarum sacerdos
Virginibus, puerisque canto.

Hor. lib. iii. Od. 1.

vitiated the worship of the people. Where the objects of devotion were multiplied divinities, not merely frail, but often criminal and cruel, the worship might have been zealous, but in proportion to its zeal must have been its mischief or its absurdity. We accordingly find, that the ritual of Grecian and Roman piety often stimulated the populace to acts of wantonness or of frenzy, and that it contributed less to enlighten and elevate the prostrate votary, than to confirm his delusion and to perpetuate his errors.

As far as the religion, indeed, concerned the mass of society, it was not a system of internal piety, but of external observances. The sacrifice was indispensable, but the sin might be retained *. If the hecatomb was offered, it was intended as a bribe to the gods, rather than as an acknowledgment of repentant crime. All sound and salutary doctrines gave way to the formal and minute observances of an imposing superstition †. The priest and priestess were selected for the dignity of their deportment, and the majesty and beauty of their form; and, to increase the credulous veneration of the people, they were distinguished by the emblems of their appropriate deities ‡, and by magnificent garments, in which the names of the benefactors of the temple were

• Appendix W.

† The people assembled for worship were, at stated periods, to kiss the ground, to stand up, to kneel, to prostrate themselves on the earth, and to hold forth branches which were to be occasionally applied to their lips, extended towards heaven, raised before the statues of the gods, and waved in the air with ceremonial exactness: Pott. *Archæolog.* lib. ii. c. 5. *Apollon. Vit.* lib. iv. c. 4. *Theophrast.* ch. xvi. *Laert.* in *Diog.* lib. vi. § 37. *Sophocl.* in *Œdip. Tyrann.*

‡ Appendix, Note X.

woven in letters of gold. But the stratagems of priestly craft were rarely redeemed by the just solemnities of rational devotion, and often aided by the indecencies of gross and prurient representations; and the scandals which prevailed in the public worship, and were sanctioned by the holy fraud of the ministers of the altar, have been recorded and condemned by the more grave and rational piety of the historian*.

Even the most interesting ceremonies of this religion were degraded by the intermixture of observances, which, though unintelligible or absurd, was considered as essential to the efficacy of the worship. A cake of meal and salt was piously placed on the head of the victim, the hair was carefully plucked from the forehead, the thighs were burned with cloven wood; and, when the priest was solicited to explain the nature and purpose of these rites, he was to conceal his ignorance under an authoritative appeal to the wisdom and example of former times†.

The worship which was thus absurd, was often to be accompanied by the most sanguinary and savage oblations. Human victims, to be slain upon the altars, or buried alive, or committed to the flames, were frequently required by the wrath of the offended gods. Three beautiful Persian captives were sacrificed as a vow for victory, to Bacchus Omestes, or the devourer‡. A Sybilline verse demanded the oblation of a Greek man and a Greek woman, and a Gaulish man and a Gaulish woman,

* Strabo, lib. viii. p. 581. lib. xii. p. 837.

† Athæn. lib. vii. c. 13. p. 127.

‡ Plutarch. In Themist.

and the requisition was obeyed*. At the beginning of the second Punic war, a man was buried alive to conciliate the divine favour†. And, when Rome was approached by the triumphant Gauls, the Romans most distinguished for their station and patriotism, assembled in the forum, and, being devoted by the pontiff, consecrated themselves to the infernal gods‡.

The *ver sacrum* was another sacrifice of devotion, designed to conciliate the protection of heaven. The superstition which encouraged and sanctified this oblation, displayed its zeal with numerical precision. In fulfilling the celebrated vow of Fabius, the money to be expended was to amount to the sum of three hundred and thirty-three thousand sesterces, three hundred and thirty-three denarii, and one-third of a denarii. Goats, sheep, swine, cows, sometimes all the young of the herds and flocks of a province, or of a nation, for a whole year, were to be offered up with unthinking and destructive prodigality||. Even children might be legitimately included in the oblation; and, though their blood was not to stain the altar, they might be devoted to the miseries of a barbarous desecration, and driven forth from their country to perish in distant lands.

* Plutarch. In Marcel. The Cheronæan sage tells us very coolly, that human sacrifices were continued down to his time. The historian records the fact; the moralist forgets to condemn it.

† Livy speaks as if this mode of sacrifice were frequently resorted to. Hist. lib. xxii. c. 57.

‡ *Majores natu amplissimis usi honoribus, in forum coierunt, ibique devovente pontifice, Diis et manibus consacreverunt.* Florus. lib. i. c. 13.

|| The vow of Fabius included all the young of the herds and flocks throughout all Italy, produced from the 1st of March to the 1st of May. Plut. In Num.

The devotion which was vitiated by these idle or barbarous practices, was to be excited or regulated by a degrading reverence of external signs. The will of the gods, instead of being deduced from their benevolence and justice, was to be inferred from imaginary omens, the exta of animals, the flight of birds, the reveries of dreams, the manner in which the victim approached the altar, the common phenomena of nature, a word incidentally uttered, a casual tingling of the ears, or a convulsive motion of the eye-lids*. These, and many other appearances or signs, equally indifferent†, were to excite the religious apprehensions of the people, and to be followed by acts of devotion, and by rites and expiations, as strange and irrational as the presages which had given them birth were idle and absurd. Was a serpent discovered in a house? An altar was to be erected on the spot, and consecrated with peculiar observances and prayers. Was a kite seen hovering in the air? The beholder was instantly to prostrate himself with devout humility. Was the imagination disturbed by grief or malady? It was the comfortless and cruel Empusa, or some evil phantom commissioned by the waywardness of Hecate, that inflicted the calamity, and was to be propitiated only by appropriate ceremonies or vows‡.—Where such persuasions were entertained,

* Appendix, Note Y.

† Sneezing, thunder, an eclipse, a yawn. These indications of the divine will were so numerous, that the devotion or superstition of the people was perpetually exercised. Homer. *Il.* lib. i. v. 63. Sophocl. *Electr.* V. 426. Theophrast. c. xvi. Theocrit. *Idyll.* iii. 37. Ælian. *Var. Hist.* lib. iv. c. 17.

‡ Terent. In *Phorin.* act iv. sc. 4. Aristoph. In *Av.* 501. In *Ran.* 295. Theophrast. c. xvi. The effect produced by omens

how great and credulous must have been the superstition of the people ! Where such superstition prevailed, how extravagant and impure must have been the popular devotion !

But this devotion was often as immoral in its tendency, as it was absurd in its superstition. When the people, assembled at Corinth from every part of Greece, approached the shrine of their beloved goddess, the patroness of stupration, vows and sacrifices were pronounced and tendered in perfect accordance with the impurity adored. Crowds of females were associated in the worship of the deity, who were taught to consider chastity and *decorum* as crimes. The priestess derived her revenue from the source of infamy and corruption ; and the profligacy of the devotion was sufficiently redeemed by the amplitude of the tribute.

On various other occasions, licentiousness, equally extravagant and disgusting, was to degrade, and to be authorized by, the solemnities of worship. Bands of courtezans, as beautiful as they were profligate, were to seduce the votaries of a Cybele or a Flora, and to kindle the flames of wantonness and of impurity*. Farces, according to the ritual of the devotion, were to be exhibited in the theatre, and processions in the circus, of the grossest character ; and the female ministrants heard and obeyed with alacrity the order of the multitude, to cast aside the invidious

and presages on the public mind would be thought scarcely credible. " You must desist," said the consul Cornelius, as he entered the senate house with a pale and disturbed countenance, " I myself have visited the boiler, and the head of the liver is consumed." Livy, lib. xii. c. 15.

* Gibbon, *Miscellan. Works*, Vol. v. p. 452.

robe, and display the charms more openly, which a slight and almost transparent drapery had but ill-concealed. This revelry, so well calculated to awaken the fervor of the passions, was restrained neither by the voice of shame, nor the authority of law. The moralist and the magistrate sanctioned by their permission the orgies which they might have secretly condemned*; and custom and religion were alike to legitimate the infamies, which public welfare and private and public decency should have contributed to proscribe.

The mind of the people was thus to be impressed by devotion itself, with images of obscenity. But, if the passions of men, even when admonished by the voice of genuine religion, be too apt to degenerate into impurity and crime; what was to be expected, when licentiousness was thus authorized to kindle her torch at the altars of the gods? What was to follow, when the worst tendencies of human nature were cherished and indulged under the express authority of heaven? And what must have been the creed, which, with the concurrence of the bards, the pontiffs, and the legislators of the most civilized regions of the earth, was to admit and sanction practices, calculated only to impair or subvert all the essential decencies, and all the moral economy of life†?

* When Cato, during the festival of Flora, entered the theatre, a momentary respect for virtue and decorum checked the libertinism of the populace; but as soon as he discovered the effect which his presence had produced, he prudently retired, and his complaisance was acknowledged by the plaudits of the multitude.

† The acute and sarcastic Gibbon has glanced at the probable influence of the devotion authorized and enjoined under the mythology of Greece and Rome. He speaks of "gay, frolicsome, and wanton rites; of naked girls, selected for their beauty, who danced

The worship of the Greek and Roman was not merely mischievous in its tendency to debauch the manners and the heart. It is further chargeable with the pernicious absurdities of magical incantations. Under the ritual by which it was regulated, gods and ghosts, and demons and demigods, were alike invoked. The shades of the dead, tempted to revisit the earth by the scent of blood, and by the charm of evocation, were required to reveal the destiny of the future, and the will of heaven ; and evil and beneficent deities were brought on the scene, by the potency of magic, to accomplish the views of human passions. Of the forms observed on these mysterious occasions, some may have been less criminal than others, but all were absurd. When the more benevolent deities were to be invoked, the mode of address became comparatively inoffensive and guiltless. But evil and malignant powers were to be subdued to the purposes of the priest or the magician, by horrible and terrific incantations. The deepest and darkest caverns were chosen for the celebration of the rites. The ceremony commenced at the hour of midnight. Black victims were offered up. Even children were, sometimes, to perish beneath the sacrificial knife, that their entrails might be consulted and questioned by the minister of the ceremonies ; and the whole scene—the officiating priest, armed with the instrument of sacrifice, or solemnly pronouncing the strain of evocation ; the dead or expiring bodies with which he was surrounded ; the

and caroused in the processions ;” and of ceremonies which “ might extort a smile of contempt from any reasonable man.” Decl. and Fall of the Rom. Emp. ch. xviii. The statement is feeble, the censure inadequate.

blood which deluged the floor of the cave ; the gloom which rendered every object still more hideous ; were in admirable unison with the fearful and unholy rites to be performed, and well calculated to impress the mind with amazement and terror*.

In these evocations, the god, or the demon, was to be called forth by the irresistible energy of certain terms, or by the charm of herbs collected for the occasion, and applied by the priest with mysterious solemnity ; and it was always essential to the efficacy of the rite, to observe, with cautious accuracy, the aspect of the stars, the number, the age, and the quality of the victims, and the moment prescribed for the commencement of the evocation. It was difficult, however, to determine what divinities were to be addressed, what offerings to be presented, and what perfumes to stimulate and gratify the celestial or infernal power. A compliment in the slightest degree either too much or too little, in the oblation, was to be equally fatal to the magical process ; and, as the breaking of a string destroys the harmony of an instrument, the least omission with respect to any of the Gods, who were the objects of the mystery, was, in the same manner, to mar the efficacy of the whole incantation†.

This pious and minute accuracy was to be scrupulously observed on almost every occasion of Grecian and Roman sacrifice. To every deity some appropriate animal was consecrated for the purpose

* Appendix, Note Z.

† Jamblichus, in his treatise on the Mysteries, has minutely detailed the forms of these magical incantations. See also Bannier Mytholog. tom. i. pp. 397, 398. Similar practices had prevailed among the Israelites. 2 Kings xxiii. 11, 12. Moses forbade them.

of oblation *. Was an evil power to be appeased? the victim was to be black. Was a beneficent power to be conciliated? the victim was to be white. Was the deity adored, male, female, barren, or fruitful? the victim was to be pregnant, barren, female or male. The strictness of these pious regulations admitted of no deviation. The efficacy of the devotion depended on the form; and the motive of the worshipper was incomparably less important than the mode of the worship.

Thus, in whatever light we contemplate the system of worship adopted by Greece and Italy, we discover errors and absurdities not less gross in the principle, than ludicrous or pernicious in the practice. Such a system, in some of its parts, the rare wisdom of the philosophic legislator might have secretly condemned, though unable to correct it †; but the people believed and observed; and the magistracy and the laws justified a creed and a ritual, formed to exercise the mind in a ceaseless round of frivolous or unmeaning ceremonies, or in the observance of rites, of which some could only tend to inflame the ardor of the most licentious of the

* To the gloomy Hecate was sacrificed a dog. The smiling Venus demanded a pigeon or a dove. Mars was pleased to accept the furious and warlike bull. Ceres delighted in the blood of the sow. The browsing goat was consistently required by the protecting deity of the vine; and the ruler of the floods craved and obtained the best produce of the toils of the fisherman.

† One of the most barbarous of the sacrifices of the Greeks was that which was offered to Diana at Sparta; and which, though Lycurgus forbade it, continued to prevail. Plutarch, in *Lycurg.* acknowledges that he saw several boys whipped to death at the foot of the altar.

In the same manner young girls were often scourged on the altar of Bacchus till they died. See Potter. *Antiq.* vol. i. lib. ii. p. 258.

passions, and others to corrupt, to harden, and to brutify the heart.

Every thing, indeed, was here calculated for the superstitious bigot, or the wanton voluptuary. On some occasions, the human oblation, to which the dramatist and the historian adverted without comment and without censure*, was to soothe the souls of the dead, to appease the indignation of angry gods, or to strike the multitude with religious awe. At other times, the festival was gay, prodigal, wanton, and sumptuous; the officiating priest appeared in all the dignity of his office, and clothed in peculiar and splendid garments; the marble temples, decorated with porticoes and altars, were thrown open to the multitude; the costly sacrifices were accompanied by the most pompous and imposing ceremonies; the genius of the painter, the statuary, and the poet, was exercised to animate the fervour of the worshipper; and meretricious dance, and naked beauty, and inspiring music, and all the various gaiety of wild and frolicsome procession, were introduced to kindle the zeal of the votary, or foment the passions of the man. Of these pious prodigalities, these proud and expensive rites, and these indecent and disgusting exhibitions, the effect corresponded with the design. A politic superstition was established in the bosom of the people; and religion, by occupying the popular levity and licence, and by alternately exciting the fanaticism, or awakening the illicit passions, of its votaries, became subservient to the rule and government of the state. But that which thus deluded, was, at the same time, to corrupt the virtue of the multitude. There was no sentiment cherished or

* Appendix, Note A. A.

known of a just and sublime devotion. Forms superseded principles. The most erroneous persuasions of Providence and of God issued into a correspondent worship ; and that worship, at best, was but a solemn or mischievous mockery, insulting to the nature and attributes of the Supreme Being, and injurious, in its effects, to the moral and intellectual capacity of man.

SECT. II.

The worship of the Hindu—Little spirituality—Innumerable forms—Rich oblations to procure the favour of the gods—Human sacrifices—The wife and child tendered to soften the obduracy of heaven—Penances and abstractions—Description of the true devotee—Voluptuous service of the temples—Holy libertinism—Dancing girls—The scandal of the worship—The degradation of the worshipper.

WE have contemplated the perversion of the taste, the reason, and the piety of the Greek, in the extravagant ritual of his religious observances ; and we have seen those faculties which, on so many other subjects, appear to have been capable of the noblest efforts and the most exalted attainments, sinking into feebleness and degeneracy when exercised in the detail or in the observance of the indispensable duties of man to God.

The Bramin, in this view, does not surpass the Greek. He boldly asserts the infallible evidences of the inspiration of his creed ; and he fearlessly refers to a period, and its attendant circumstances, when the pure and perfect Vedas issued from the lips of the celestial Brama. On the justice of these lofty pretensions it will not be difficult to decide. Some views have been already opened which have enabled

us to discover but the weaknesses of man, where the Hindu recognises but the wisdom of God ; and we now hasten to a discussion which may afford additional evidences of the low and earthly parentage of a religion so proudly and confidently deduced from the authority of heaven.

Occasionally, I am not disposed to deny, the worship in which the Indian is instructed by his sacred books, may be of a sublime and spiritual character. But his devotions, divided among so many discordant deities, must be proportionally diversified, and proportionally contradictory, in its forms of petition, of ceremony, or of invocation. There is not a point of the heavens to which he must not turn at intervals, with some prescribed attitude, or some essential observance. His gods are to be piously dipped in the consecrated stream, anointed with rich and odoriferous oils, decorated with the lustre of splendid jewels, clothed in graceful or magnificent garments, presented with pure and costly lamps, and honoured with showers of aromatic blossoms. The ministers of these deities are to attend with chouries of white hair or peacocks feathers, and, fanning them gently, to repel the insects which might otherwise violate the purity of their forms. The worship is to be animated by the production of the emblematic Lingam, bathed in milk, the drops of which, caught and preserved with care, are to be administered to the dying, in order to secure them, hereafter, the delights of paradise. Finally, the votary, having preferred his vow, and performed with due accuracy the rites prescribed, is to receive from the hand of his priest a redeeming portion of the garland with which his favourite deity is

adorned, and to present the offering in return, which is to enrich the treasury of the priesthood, and to purchase the aid of celestial interposition*.

The augmentation of the revenues of the Pagoda has been always, indeed, the chief object of the ritual of Hindu worship. The priest, possessing the unrestricted power to absolve or to curse, easily discovered, and freely employed, the means of unlocking the coffers of the votary. No less than sixteen kinds of oblations were proposed to the choice of the devout worshipper; and horses, and vine trees, and elephants, and chariots, of gold, were among the number of the gifts required by the craving but holy avarice of the gods†. At the will of the priest, offerings of this nature might be substituted for the purifications of penance; and the terror of the last, was often employed to extort the first.

To the forms of Hindu devotion, are added the injunctions of human sacrifice. Fanaticism, and the hope of propitiating the gods, not unfrequently supply the voluntary victim. It is not merely the aged and infirm, who aspire to the honours of self-devotion. The young and healthy of both sexes, their eyes sparkling, their long hair dishevelled on their shoulders, their necks decorated with garlands of flowers, their bosom heaving with ungovernable zeal, rush wildly and impetuously into the presence of the god they worship, celebrate his praise in loud and enthusiastic strains, and, finally, heated by their own movements, and stimulated by the applauding shouts of the surrounding multitude, emulate the

* Appendix, Note B. B.

† Ayeen Akberry, vol. iii. 29. Tavernier, lib. i. c. 2.

martyrdom and acquire the glories of the victims of Juggernaut*.

These hideous solemnities sometimes continue for several days. The appetite of the voracious deity is to be satisfied but by the reiterated repast of human blood. The popular piety would consider a paucity of victims as a proof of national corruption, and a presage of national calamity. The Bramins of the highest authority, with imposing solemnity and heads uncovered, attend and encourage the sanguinary worship; and the saving zeal of ignorance and of fanaticism, seldom fails to afford a spectacle so edifying and so delightful to the insane devotion of the multitude†.

But the sacrifice is not always thus voluntary. The sanguinary power requires something more than the spontaneous oblation of the holy fanatic. The dearest charities and sensibilities of domestic life are often to be sacrificed to the monster god; and not only has the wife been frequently offered up by the infatuated husband, but the child has been torn from the bosom of its reluctant mother, or voluntarily tendered by the frantic piety of its parents, to feed and satiate celestial voracity‡.

From sanguinary observances thus monstrous and so vile, we turn to consider those forms of devotional penance and abstraction which are so highly estimated in the religion of the Hindus.

Man, says the Veda, is to ascend through various gradations of toil and suffering, to the high sphere of perfect fruition. Among the votaries of India, accordingly, penances and abstractions, of the most

* Buchanan. *Christian Researches*, p. 139, &c.

† Appendix, Note C. C.

‡ Appendix, Note D. D.

these voluntary sufferings. His worship is often, with contradictory changefulness, directed to gods of a gay and sportive character ; and the more indulgent divinities who favour his pleasures, are to be conciliated by rites of libertine and voluptuous wantonness. The votary of penance is to be contrasted with the disciple of indecent revelry and profligate indulgence. The walls of the pagoda are to present to his eyes the images of obscenity ; and emblems, too gross to be explained, are to kindle his passions in the recesses of the temple *. The rites of worship are celebrated with correspondent impurity ; the altars of the gods become the theatre of human pleasures ; and the shameful representations of graphic pruriency are found sufficiently to encourage the disgusting scandals of living licentiousness.

The wantonness of the worshipper is not enflamed solely by the sanction of the priest, or by the naked images of the painter or of the sculptor. A train of women, whose natural beauties are heightened by the embellishments of art, and who are taught by the most experienced of the Bramins to add the artifices of seduction to the charms of symmetry and of youth, are carefully provided for the service of the temple, and the honour of the idol †. Dances

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“ sacred grass koos, with his eyes intently fixed on
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crowd, by the melody of their voice, the voluptuousness of their hymns, and the meretricious scandal of their air and attitudes. The scene advances in licence till it ends in excess. The female ministrants learn to burn with the same fires which they communicate; the priest sanctions the orgies suited to such a theatre and such a devotion; and the rites and festivities of the worship, become the shame, the reproach, and the degradation of the worshipper*.

A devotion such as these pages have exhibited, demands no comment. Corrupt in principle and impure in practice, it pervades and vitiates the great mass of society. In the most gentle people of the earth, it occasionally kindles, by its observances, the most ferocious passions, and the most licentious desires. It converts the temple of devotion into a scene of wantonness or of blood; and the prayers, the sacrifices, and the oblations which it requires, are such only as could be tolerated by the most abject and slavish superstition, or be tendered to the most malignant and dissolute of gods.

SECT. III.

Incidental purity and spirituality of the worship taught or required by the Koran—The partiality of God to the Mussulman—Consequent fanaticism and presumption—The most acceptable offering, the blood of the infidel—Processions, fasts, pilgrimages, and purifications, necessary to appease God, and qualify the worshipper for paradise—The worship, in its general character, injurious to the moral and social temper of man.

THE superstructure of the Koran is a mighty mass of truth and falsehood. Though the edifice bears the marks of no common hand, the skill of the

* Appendix. Note F. F.

architect was frequently governed, as we have seen, by policy and passion; and the grandeur and the beauty which sometimes demand and deserve applause, are contrasted by meannesses and inconsistencies, which alike attest incongruity in the design or inability in the execution.

On the subject of worship the prophet has betrayed similar inconsistency. The noble ideas of God and Providence which he so often, and with such magnificence of language, communicates to his followers, might have been sufficient to suggest the necessity of a pure and spiritual devotion. But those ideas were intermingled with others of a very different character; and a contradictory creed must issue into contrary effects. When the disciple of the Koran falls down before "the High and the Mighty One who created and who governs the universe," he may pour forth the aspirations which are due to the father and sovereign of nature. But what must be his prayer when he addresses a Deity who has consecrated, by his word, the sword of extermination, and sent forth his prophet, and his prophet's armies, to deluge the world with the blood of the infidel! A Being merciful to the few, and cruel to the many, will be contemplated and worshipped with conflicting impressions; and the God who, while he opens his paradise to the sect of the faithful, avows his delight in the overthrow and persecution of the rest of mankind, will be honoured or insulted by the mingled adoration of grateful reverence and fanatic fury.

The best offering, according to the Koran, which can be tendered to the Almighty, is the blood of the enemies of "the last and most holy of the prophets;" and the best prayers which ascend to the Deity are

the supplications of the faithful for the overthrow of the unbelievers. "God is merciful and just;" but his justice and mercy are the holy and exclusive heritage of the elected Islem. "God is the parent of mankind;" but the professor of the Koran is the child of his love, and the champion of his creed, who is to pursue the disciples of every other religion with interminable war*. Under the influence of these persuasions the Mussulman approaches the temple of the Divinity. His belief governs his prayers. He brings to the altar a spirit narrowed in its benevolence to a sect, extending in its ferocity to the world; and, blending the haughty consciousness of the exclusive favour of heaven, with the holy detestation of the rejected and excommunicated infidel, he pours his aspirations in the exclusive vanity of his heart. "Thou art praised by the earth, and all that therein is, neither is there any thing which doth not celebrate thy praise; thou shalt make the unbeliever to tremble, and shalt leave him no refuge, and shall take him from a near place†; and a devil shall be chained unto him, and be his inseparable companion; and verily an evil mercy shall be unto him. But be merciful unto me, O Lord, for I am turned unto thee, I am a Moslem‡."

The worship of the followers of the Prophet was not merely the homage of fanaticism. It was vitiated

* The language uttered in almost every page of the Koran.

† That is, say the expositors, "from the outside of the earth to the inside thereof; or from God's tribunal to hell fire; or from the plain of Beda to the well in which the dead bodies were thrown." Kor. ch. xxxiv. vol. ii. p. 294; and Note in loco.

‡ Kor. ch. xvii. p. 101. ch. xlvi. v. ii. pp. 302, 303.

and encumbered by the absurdity of idle and contemptible forms, adopted in compliance with the prejudices and passions of local superstition. The artful adventurer who framed the Koran was necessarily to consult the temper of his idolatrous countrymen. The Arab would have disdained the proffered glories of paradise, if he had been required to purchase them at the expense of the rites and customs derived from the religion of his fathers. The observances and ceremonies, accordingly, which prescription had sanctified in his opinion, and of which his rude devotion was principally composed, were to be skilfully admitted into the worship required by the Koran; and in every Sura communicated by the angelic Gabriel, we discover the most decided marks of this politick accommodation*. The frivolous observances with which the imaginary deities of the Arabian tribes had been customarily adored, were engrafted on the worship of the true, eternal, and self-existing God. The minute ritual of fasts, processions, purifications, and pilgrimages, was required to be punctiliously observed by the orthodox votary. A failure in the mode, impaired the efficacy of the prayer; and internal reverence of the Deity was scarcely considered as more precious in the sight of God than external observances, or better adapted to qualify the worshipper for a participation of the high privileges and exquisite enjoyments of the paradise of the blessed.

* In admitting so many relics of idolatrous superstition into his system, Mahomet paid an artful preference to the prejudices and observances of his countrymen, which they would probably have refused to renounce, and which his policy and interest did not permit him to resist. Sale, Prel. Disc. sect. iv. pp. 162, 182. Did the learned translator of the Koran intend, by this remark, to vindicate the impostor?

The rules prescribed for this formal devotion are laid down with the most cautious and punctilious accuracy, and the strictness of the detail proves how much importance was attached by Mahomet to the external sign. Was there to be a devotional procession? The votary was to pace round the caaba, in a certain step, with certain pauses, and in a certain number of times. Was the prayer to be recited? The worshipper was to turn his face towards Mecca*, to bend his knees with prescribed exactness, to modulate his voice to a particular key †, and to repeat his supplications with formal regularity. These devotions were to be multiplied with holy accuracy, and to be offered with more certain acceptance, at allotted periods, and, if tendered at night, they were to be counted as works of supererogation; or, if preferred at the break of day, to be witnessed and recorded by the fidelity of inspecting angels ‡. The believer was often to prepare himself for offices of this kind, by a series of exact and minute ablutions, and to lave his head, his face, his hands, his elbows,

* This injunction is of such importance that "the direction of Mecca is carefully pointed out in every mosque, by a niche which is called *Al Mehrâb*, and without the mosque, by the situation of the doors opening into the galleries and the steeples. There are express tables of calculation in places where there are no other rules to guide the believer in this essential point." Hyde. *de Relig. Vet. Pers.* pp. 8, 9, 126, &c.

† "Pronounce thy prayers aloud, neither pronounce them in too low a voice, but follow the middle way." Kor. ch. xviii. p. 3.

‡ "Regularly prefer thy prayers at the decline of the sun, at the first darkness of the night, and at break of day, for the prayer at day-break is born witness to by angels; and watch, in some part of the night in the same exercise, as a work of supererogation." Kor. ch. xvii. vol. ii. pp. 106, 107; ch. xx. vol. ii. p. 151; ch. xxx. p. 256.

his ankles, his feet, and, sometimes, if conscious of pollution, his whole body*, before he presumed to approach the altar, and pour forth his aspirations. However pure might be the temper and the effusions of the heart, they did not, in any wise, supersede the necessity of observances like these; and piety itself was scarcely to bring down the favour of heaven, if it were not aided in its supplications by the auxiliary merits of ritual forms, framed by the fraud and policy of imposture, to accommodate the prejudices and conciliate the zeal of popular superstition.

The conclusion to be inferred from the whole of this discussion, is very obvious. An efficacy and importance are attributed by the Koran to the mode of worship, which should be ascribed only to the motive; the worshipper, who is instructed, at one moment, to contemplate in the object of his reverence the mingled qualities of mercy to the faithful and of cruelty to the infidel, is to be attached, at another, by the fundamental injunctions of his religion, to distinctions and modes with which truth and reason have little concern; and the intercourse of man with his Creator, which ought to be an intercourse only of regenerated affections and a pure heart, is to be enfeebled and modified by a ceremonial formality, in its observance burdensome and superstitious, and in its effects useless or injurious to the moral and religious capacity of human nature.

* Kor. ch. iv. p. 138. Sale's Prel. Dissert. § 4. pp. 138, 9, 149.

savage and extravagant character, have been enjoined and multiplied. In the recesses of the woods, under every banyan tree, on the banks of the rivers, in the public high-ways, the Yogee and the Faquir are to be seen, bending and expiring under the infliction of voluntary torture. The hands of one votary are closed till the nails of the fingers eat into the flesh. An inflexible silence is maintained by another for a series of years. Another extends his arms over his head, with his hands clasped together, till they become withered, rigid, and immoveable*. But the votary is abundantly repaid by the high recompence of celestial benediction. Sometimes, it is supposed, he acquires a power, by his austerities, over the elements of nature, and over the gods themselves†. Sometimes a radiant glory is said to encircle his forehead, and to attest the accomplishment of his vow, and the favour of heaven. To his countrymen, he is the object of reverence and congratulation; to his deities, of protection, of benignity, and of love.

Some of these fanatics, with a devotion which is considered as yet more commendable, exercise their piety in abstract meditation, and soar above all material objects and all worldly considerations. "The true devotee, it is said, is he who disciplines his spirit in secrecy and solitude; who is subdued in mind, and free from hope; who planteth his feet firmly on the spot which is neither too high nor

* Hectopader. p. 243. Buchanan. *Christ. Res.* p. 131. *Sketches of the Hist. &c. of the Hindus.* Plin. lib. ii. c. 2.

† On this dogma is founded the *Curse of Kehama*, by Mr. Southey; a poem, with all its wildness, worthy of the distinguished taste and genius of its author.

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with affection and gratitude the good will of those whose kindness has interposed to relieve our wants, or whose power has been exercised to redress our wrongs. Is He alone, the source of all excellence and of all good, to kindle no affectionate sensibility in the heart? Shall the universal Benefactor, whose mercies are spread over all his works, and who sent forth his Son to lighten the darkness and to expiate the sins of men, be less qualified to awaken our emotions, or less worthy of our admiration and our love? Or shall beauty, and goodness, and graciousness, call forth, on every other occasion, the sentiments of appropriate attachment and affection, and there only excite a cold and languid regard, where they are viewed in the power, the splendour, and the glory of their perfection? Is gratitude to glow with less ardour where the benefits conferred are, beyond all comparison, the greatest and the best? Or shall the frail and often ambiguous beneficence of mortal man swell the bosom with warm and tender emotions; and that beneficence which is unbounded, and invariable, and infinite, create and merit no zeal of attachment, no ardour of devotion, and no fervour of love?

But this zeal and this fervour, it seems, may produce evil effects; and they have, in fact, been frequently accused of exciting the fanaticism of the bigot and the fury of the persecutor, and of degenerating, as often, into those mystical raptures which abstract the enthusiast from the business and duties of life, and approach the Deity in language better adapted to the impurity of earthly passion, than to the dignity and innocence of the devotion of love. Yet, surely, even admitting the objection, the accidental excesses of a holy sentiment afford no pre-

sumption against its intrinsic excellence. It is not the principle, but the perverse application, that is evil. The noblest qualities of our nature may be employed for to corrupt purposes, but they are not, therefore, to be decried or extinguished. And, if we be, indeed, to contemplate in the Deity all that may excite and vindicate the most ardent, and affectionate, and grateful emotions, would it not be preposterous and absurd to condemn the emotions, because it may be said that they have incidentally kindled the zeal of the inquisitor, or the extravagance of the monk!

The Gospel which excites the sentiment, guards us against the perversion. The love of God is indeed indispensable to the efficacy of the devotion of man. But it is not to be an abstract principle, soaring beyond the concerns of the world, and despising or neglecting the duties of human intercourse. It is to become the foundation of grateful and diligent obedience, and by grateful and diligent obedience to be proved. It is to ascend to the Almighty in adoration and prayer, and to bring back new and nobler motives to purity and virtue. If it be not of this spirit, it is less than nothing; in proportion as it is of this spirit, it rises in the scale of Evangelical duty, and becomes acceptable and precious in the sight of heaven. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. This is the love of God, that men keep his commandments. And whoso keepeth God's commandments, in him is the love of God perfect." Such is the mysticism which is charged upon the devotion required by the Gospel! Such are the persecution and extravagance which are to flow from it!

But the piety inculcated by Evangelical wisdom is not limited solely to the exercise of that love of

God which is so amply justified by the unfailing and unbounded goodness of the Being to whom it soars. Supplication and sorrow may also approach the altar, and invoke the succour of heaven for the wants and weaknesses of man. God, who is invested with so many lovely and affecting attributes, is emphatically termed the hearer of prayer, whose ears are open to the cries of the righteous, and who regardeth the petitions of the needy and destitute. The divine perfections appear to be accommodated to human necessity, and the distressed condition of our being is afforded the promise and the means of aid. Is there want? It is invited to bend before the throne of mercy. Is there infirmity of mind? It is encouraged to supplicate the illumination of grace. Is there affliction? It is permitted to enter into the sanctuary of divine compassion, and to repose its trust on Almighty goodness. The duty of prayer becomes a privilege, the privilege a blessing. We are to prostrate ourselves before the Sovereign of the world, but the command requires only that devotion which our necessities would dictate, and which, while it exercises our obedience and our trust, connects us by the most holy ties with the Father, the protector, and the benefactor of man.

In this life much is there that is uncertain, much that is calamitous and dark. Disappointment, danger, and distress, lie on every side in wait for their victims. If we look back, we shall be ready to admit that our most eager pursuits have often terminated in vanity, and that our best pleasures have been as the phantoms of a dream. If we look forward, we shall be lost in a region of clouds and darkness, where conjecture may never close its wing in repose, and hope may erect its structure on nothing better than doubts

and shadows. In such a state, is it of trifling import that we are invited to approach the source of life and light, and to implore the aid of celestial mercy? Is the doctrine of little value, which directs us to a sure asylum in the wilderness of the world, and tenders to our necessities the support and staff of the Shepherd of Israel? Can devotion be invested with a more gracious and salutary privilege, than that by which it is permitted to lay the infirmities of the creature before the compassion of the Creator? Or can we contemplate without emotions of gratitude, that sublime religion, which, while it enforces, with such solemnity of injunction, the duties of piety, connects those duties by an indissoluble bond with human happiness?

Under other religions, the Deity is to be propitiated by forms which have little to do with the frame and temper of the heart. But the humble disciple of the Gospel is to conciliate the divine favour by the oblations of the spirit. From him a holy aspiration is of more value in the sight of heaven than the most costly offerings; and the mite which he lays with grateful emotion upon the altar, is converted into a precious "memorial before God"—"My son, give me thy heart. God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. And when thou prayest, be not as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray at the corner of the streets, that they may be seen of men; nor use vain repetitions, as the heathen do, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking; but enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in heaven, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee

“openly*.” Here is required no splendid and costly rite, and no burdensome and afflictive duty. The injunction is, indeed, grave, but it is not oppressive; solemn, but it demands only that which purity and love may supply. The good and gracious parent is heard to claim the affections of the child. The friend and legislator of man, averting himself from the worldly ostentation of hypocritical worship, declares the value of the sincere oblation of humble faith, and annexes to the devotion of the heart the unfailing promise of celestial acceptance.

There is singular beauty in the manner in which the devotion thus required, is connected with the graces of social benevolence. Before we presume to address the Almighty in prayer, we are called upon to subdue every malignant and revengeful passion of the heart, and the works and sentiments of mercy are to give efficacy to the prayers and supplications of piety. All sin is offensive to God; but the sins of wrath and malice, brought to the altar, convert the worship into an insult and an abomination; and the pardon and protection which are implored, are averted by the vices of the temper which implores them. “Ye have heard that it was
“said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and
“whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the
“judgment. But I say, that whosoever is angry
“with his brother without a cause, shall be in
“danger of the judgment. Therefore, if thou bring
“thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy
“brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy
“gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be
“reconciled to thy brother, and then come and

* Matt. vi. 6, &c.

"offer thy gift*."—Explore the religions of human contrivance; collect the most admirable and useful of their precepts; but where shall you find any to compare in excellence with doctrines like as these? any in purity so perfect, in tendency so salutary, in motive so affecting, in reference to God and man so holy and so just? The tenets of sages and bards may have been occasionally good and wise; but by these only piety has been indissolubly connected with morals, and the devotion due to God associated with the humanity and compassion due to our fellow creatures. The principles of Pagan worship may have been occasionally pure and salutary; but by these only the worship has been taught which is to involve, at once, the love of God and the love of man, to derive its efficacy from the mercies of the heart from which it flows, and, while it conciliates the divine favour, to exalt and to purify the passions, the principles, and the will.

Of the devotion which is thus required of man to his Maker, we are not instructed in the temper and spirit only, but in the mode and language in which it is to prefer its petitions. To implore the superfluous vanities of life, and the pomps and pleasures of the world, we are encouraged neither by precept nor by promise, because such things are foreign from the real welfare of man. But for those blessings which are consonant with the genuine interests of our nature, the aspirations of piety may ascend not only without blame, but with confidence and hope. "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of

* Matt. v. 24, 25.

“ man. Lift ye up holy hands without wrath and
“ doubting. Let supplications and giving of thanks
“ be made for all men, that we may lead a quiet
“ and peaceful life, in all godliness and honesty, for
“ this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our
“ Saviour*.” And, when the disciples asked of
Christ in what manner they should offer up their
petitions to God, how interesting are the instructions
which he gives them, and how admirable is the model
of prayer which he prescribes! We are oppressed
or repelled by no dark and dogmatical injunctions.
To whom are we to offer up our supplications? Not
to him who is represented solely as the Omnipotent
and mysterious Sovereign of nature, whom it is awful
and fearful to approach, but to him who is described
to us under the endearing and encouraging appella-
tion of “ Our Father which is in heaven.” For
what are we to pray? That his will may be done in
earth as it is in heaven; that his kingdom, the king-
dom of righteousness and peace, may be established
amongst men; that his paternal goodness may supply
our daily wants; that his compassion may “ forgive
“ us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass
“ against us;” and that his grace may guide us in
the hour of infirmity and temptation, and his pro-
tecting care may rest upon us and “ deliver us from
“ evil.”—In these instructions all is simple, but
all is sublime. They recall man to himself and to
God. We are reminded of the bodily and spiritual
wants of our nature. The genuine source of comfort
and of aid is opened to us. The lesson is impressed
on the heart, that we must forgive, if we would be

* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3. See also Matt. vii. 7, 9; Luke xxi. 36;
Rom. xii. 12; Philip. iv. 6; 1 Thess. v. 17.

forgiven. And we are encouraged, in the purity and humility of the spirit, to address God with that holy confidence in his benignity, which, amid all the changes and chances of this fluctuating scene, may afford rest, and peace, and comfort to our souls.

According, then, to the doctrines of the Gospel, the devotion claimed by the Almighty is not so much an exercise of abstract and contemplative piety, as a pure, sublime, and energetic sentiment, regenerating the hearts and rectifying and ennobling the principles of men. The splendid sacrifices of kings and potentates are here as nothing. The supplications that issue from upright and holy lips, are here as every thing. No offering from impure hands, no prayer from the polluted bosom, is to be accepted or heard. The love of God which approaches the altar, is to bring there also the love of man; and the piety, if so it may be called, which does not include a principle of obedience to the divine will, which does not chasten and reform all the malignant and wrathful passions of the heart, which does not glow with the mingled flame of devotion and of charity, is but an insult to the Being whom it presumes to supplicate. In this manner is religious inseparably connected with moral duty. The temple of celestial mercy is opened to all who approach it with clean hands and a pure heart. And man is led into an intercourse with his Creator, which, while it confirms his spirit in resignation and hope, sends him forth into the world with views, and motives, and persuasions, that equally contribute to the dignity of his nature, the purity of his conduct, and the happiness of his life.

It has been already observed, that the best and wisest of the sages of antiquity admitted the necessity of a divine revelation to instruct mankind in the duties of worship. Enough was seen to discover the defects

of reason, but not to remedy ; and the philosophers of the schools were not only to condemn the ignorance and folly demonstrated in the form and in the spirit of the public worship, but openly to avow the deficiency of their own proud and elaborate systems †. Referring, then, to the view which has been just taken, let it be asked, Has this want been supplied, has this darkness been illuminated, has this admitted ignorance been succeeded by truth and wisdom ? Do we indeed possess doctrines, on the subject of devotion, in perfect harmony with the nature of God and the necessities of man ? Are the temple and the altar no longer to be profaned, under the sanction of religion, by the vile worship of abject servility, of unholy passions, of unsanctified desires, of idolatrous reverence, of a sanguinary faith ? Has the meek and lowly Jesus, the despised, uneducated, and unaided child of abasement and want, while he supplied the precepts which the learning and inquiry of so many ages had sought in vain, dissipated the glooms which hung between the creature and the Creator, and perfectly instructed the first in what manner to serve and adore the last ? Here, then, we must admit that mere reason, in a Person whose portion was poverty, obscurity, and neglect, was adequate to discover, to promulgate, and to familiarize, truths, which the wisest of uninspired men had been utterly unable to conceive or to approach ; or that Christ was, indeed, the messenger of heaven, commissioned to impart to mankind the knowledge of the divine will, and to conduct a benighted and superstitious world from the abject and degraded shrines of idolatry, to the pure temples of the living God.

CHAPTER VI.

RELIGIOUS RITES AND INSTITUTIONS.

SECT. I.

Religious rites of the Greeks and Romans sometimes beautiful and interesting—Pomp and splendour of those celebrities—The Panathenæa—The general observances of a different character—The rites of Bacchus—The Lupercalia—The Corinthian Venus—Impure and corrupting orgies—The priesthood and the fraternities set apart for the due observance of the religious celebrities—Especial offices of several of the priestly orders—No provision made for the instruction of the people, by any portion of the priestly brotherhood—The system designed for political influence, not moral.

THE legislators of Greece, more earnest to govern than to instruct mankind, adapted their religious institutions to the purposes of popular indulgence. For the citizen, whose senses and fancy might otherwise have engaged him in more mischievous pursuits, the splendid machinery of an external worship was prepared. Processions, and shows, and festivals, of frequent recurrence, and of varied interest, were to occupy his idleness, or to amuse his curiosity; and his passions were to be absorbed in gay and magnificent observances, which might divert attention from politics to pleasure. Accordingly, the system was gradually matured, of wanton, cheerful, and imposing celebrities, which constituted the boast and delight of the Greek. In the midst of his temples, in his marble vestibules, in

the shade of his porticoes, or in the streets of his cities and villages, he was almost incessantly engaged in ceremonies calculated to gratify his busy and versatile character; and the rites of his worship, however injurious in their influence on his manners and morals, were to become accessory, as was supposed, to the tranquillity of the state, and the views of the legislature.

Of the ceremonies thus interwoven with religion, some, it will be admitted, were beautiful, and, perhaps, salutary, and formed to humanize the multitude, by the associations of cheerful and innocent observances. Sometimes the assembled people were to celebrate the return of the verdure of spring, and the harvests of autumn; and a common gratitude for the gifts of heaven was to be attested by the piety of a common thanksgiving. At other periods, the solemnity was exhibited in honour of characters illustrious for their valour or their virtue, or in laudable commemoration of glorious or happy events. The victories by which invading armies had been repelled; the cessation of a pestilence; the restoration of peace between contending states; the re-establishment of public liberty by the patriot or the sage, were occurrences which might periodically call forth the legitimate and grateful exercise of general piety. Even the more common events of life were to be accompanied by rites designed to impress the minds of men with a due sense of the kindness of Providence; and the birth of a child, the enrolment of his name in the list of citizens, and his attested progress in the exercises of the Gymnasium, were each to be distinguished by some appropriate festival. The young and the old, the parent and the progeny, the individual and the state, were almost equally concerned in these

affecting and useful celebrities ; and, while devotion was thus blended with the common affairs of men, festivity and joy were rendered auxiliary to religion*.

Many of these institutions were celebrated with extraordinary pomp. On some occasions, upwards of three hundred oxen, decorated with wreaths of flowers, were led in solemn procession to the altar ; the temples, perfumed with incense, were crowded with choirs of young people of both sexes, displaying all the charms of early life, and chanting in chorus the praises of the gods ; appropriate dramas, the productions of immortal genius, were exhibited in the theatres, to delight, at once, and to instruct the multitude†. The poet, the painter, the orator, the historian, the sophist, exercised their talents to win the applause of their fellow countrymen ; and song and dance, and the spectacles of the Gymnasium, were combined to unite the people in one general gaiety ; and attach them more closely to religion and to the state.

In the festival of the Panathenæa we behold a splendid example of these singular and salutary celebrities. The festivity commenced with horse races on the banks of the Ilyssus ; and these were succeeded by the strengthening and martial exercises

* Aristot. de Mor. lib. viii. c. 11. Plut. de Glor. Athen. cap. ii.

† These representations were exhibited at an immense expense ; and fleets might have been fitted out, and armies maintained, by the sums which were thus lavished. The Romans seem to have been scarcely less extravagant. The daily pay of Roscius amounted to 20*l.* according to Macrobius, Saturn. 2, 10 ; and Cicero computes his annual receipts at 5,000*l.* and Pliny at 4,000*l.* Cicer. Pro Rosc. Plin. Nat. Hist. 7. 39.

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attacking each other in mock combat, at stated intervals, represented, to the sound of the flute, the memorable battle of Minerva and the Titans*.

To institutions like these philosophy and virtue have nothing to object. They were indulgent in their celebration, and humanizing in their influence. Uniting the people in a splendid but orderly festivity, they promoted a useful association of all the orders of the state, and blended the rich and the poor in one common and delightful celebrity. Labour and toil were thus permitted to repose. The high and the low, united by these bonds of public fellowship, lost something, the first, of the pride and haughtiness which dignity of station so frequently inspires, the second, of the jealousy and envy with which superior affluence and rank are so generally beheld. All, by consequence, became more social. A better and more moral citizenship was diffused. The factions of the state were softened by the cheerfulness of the public pomp; and the intercourse promoted by legitimate pleasure, while it became a means of individual gratification and of social joy, contributed to soften and to civilize the manners, the tempers, and the passions of men.

But we are not long permitted to contemplate the Grecian people assembled in the observances of a cheerful and animating worship. Festivals there were, more numerous and frequent, and of a very different character; and we cannot, without astonishment, advert to the vehemence with which the elegant Greek, and the less fanciful Roman, could associate in orgies distinguished by the vilest

* Plato. In Hipp. vol. ii. p. 228.

extravagance, and the most wanton, unblushing, and unbridled effrontery.

During the rites of Bacchus, whole cities were converted into one scene of uproar and confusion. The votaries, male and female, crowned with ivy and poplar, and full, as it was pretended, of the majesty and the divinity of the god, rushed through the streets, or along the highways, with shout, and dance, and revelling licentiousness. The most indecent spectacles, the most wanton exclamations, and the most open obscenities, excited at every moment the applauding vociferation of popular frenzy. Some of the devotees were seen to tear the raw entrails of the victims with their teeth and nails; others, with holy ferocity, strangled serpents in their hands, and piously twined them round their bodies and in their hair; others elevated the most disgusting emblems on poles, and chanted aloud appropriate songs; and others exhibited every extravagance of gesture which was most likely to kindle the fury, or provoke the libertinism, of the surrounding multitude*.

The festival of the Lupercalia was scarcely less intemperate or offensive. The numerous priests by the shameless but holy ceremonies were performed, naked through the streets, indulged to serve, in all the pious excesses perverted to celebrity. The whips which they carried in their hands were by every lash to aid the some childless woman; female ere before mingled in the riot, anxious for the blessing of modesty even the high and repelled by

the grossness of a spectacle equally opposed to the purity of morals, and to all the sacred decencies of life *.

The rites of Venus were celebrated with still greater excess. Her temple at Corinth was perpetually open to the influx of worshippers from every part of Greece, and from the coast of Asia. A thousand courtezans, distinguished for their beauty, and trained for their profession, were consecrated to the service of the accommodating priestess; and an immense expense was amply remunerated by an infamous office. The more wanton the revelry, the greater was the devotion. The grossest of passions was hurried into the execrable extremes of the most execrable sensuality; and, by a monstrous and almost incredible conjunction, voluptuousness, unrestricted and unreserved, was ingrafted on religion, and dissolute riot was accompanied by the extravagance of a fantastic and fanatical worship †.

Rites of this kind were frequent and numerous. The passions and vivacity of the people were indulged, till indulgence became a habit, and habit a necessity, and till it might have been politically hazardous to curtail or purify institutions which, in a moral view, it was so mischievous to maintain. The stream, therefore, was allowed to flow. One half of the year was devoted to festivals and to riots, such as have been mentioned; and if, while so much of human life was devoted to the orgies of superstition and dissipation, there was yet to remain in the public mind a sense of religion and morality, it was not to the religion, but to the effect, but to the wisdom.

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The festival of the Lupercalia was scarcely less intemperate or offensive. The numerous priests by whom the shameless but holy ceremonies were to be performed, ran naked through the streets, and indulged, without reserve, in all the pious excesses permitted by the celebrity. The whips which they carried in their hands were by every lash to aid the secret vows of some childless woman ; female crowds were therefore mingled in the riot, anxious to receive the carnal blessing ; and the modesty even of matrons of the highest class, was not repelled by

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For the celebration of these almost ceaseless solemnities in honour of the gods, and for the other services of the temples, a high and consecrated order was set apart, by the law, in every town of Greece and Italy; and, exclusive of this body, countless fraternities were maintained, who had their appropriate offices in the less important, but still necessary, departments of the popular superstition. Almost every deity had his temple, his servants, and his worship. The altars of the Greek were scarcely less splendid in their ministerial establishment, than those of the proud and credulous Roman; and the Roman was peculiarly ambitious to furnish his shrines and his gods with a numerous and powerful priesthood. From the age of Numa to that of Gratian, the regular succession of the several colleges of the sacerdotal order was preserved at Rome. Fifteen pontiffs exercised their supreme jurisdiction over all things and persons that were consecrated to the service of the gods; and the various questions which perpetually arose in a loose and traditionary system, were submitted to the judgment of that holy tribunal. Fifteen grave and learned augurs observed the face of heaven, and deduced the fall of states and empires from the flight of birds. Fifteen keepers of the Sybilline books consulted the history of future, and, as it should seem, of contingent events. Six vestals devoted their virgin years to the guardianship of the sacred fire, and of the unknown pledges of the duration of Rome, which no mortal had been suffered to behold with impunity. Seven Eupolos prepared the table of the gods, conducted the solemn procession, and regulated the ceremonies of the annual procession. The three flamens of Jupiter, of Mars, and of Quirinus, were considered as the peculiar ministers of

he three most powerful deities who watched over the fate of Rome and of the universe. The king of the sacrifices represented the person of Numa and his successors, in the religious functions which could be performed only by royal hands. The confraternities of the Salians, the Lupercals, and other orders, presided over rites at once fanatical and absurd, with a lively confidence of recommending themselves to the favour of the immortal gods*. To the mother of the gods, the laughter loving Venus, the garden god, and the deity of the vine, were consecrated hierarchs and subaltern priests, to regulate the order of their sacred mysteries, and to engage the populace in the holy revelry of their wanton worship. In all these, the dignity of the priestly character was protected by the laws and manners of their country. Their robes of purple, their chariots of state, their sumptuous entertainments, their grave and dignified deportment, or their conscious and well sustained authority, attracted the admiration and excited the reverence of the people; and they received, from the consecrated lands, and the public revenue, and the votaries of their temple, an ample stipend, which liberally supplied the splendour of the priesthood, and provided for the expenses of the religious worship of the state.

This enumeration by no means includes the whole of the priestly orders established at Rome. Even after the reform of Gratian had curtailed the number of the gods, four hundred and twenty four temples still decorated the capital, and were still open to the piety of the people; and if, at the period of her decline, the religion of the "mighty mistress of the

* Gibbon. Decl. and Fall. ch. xxviii.

were ambitious to rule; and the rites they have prescribed are, often, and in the highest degree, sensual and obscene. The choultries, occasionally, are converted into theatres of debauch. The dance and the song of the festival accord with, and stimulate, the gross propensities of the voluptuous worshipper; and the zealous votary, inflamed by the artful wantonness of meretricious beauty, is to demonstrate the holy fervour of his zeal by the ample indulgence of his sensuality.

But the seductions of gaiety and of pleasure are not alone resorted to by the priest, for the maintenance or the extension of his influence. The Hindu institutions are to unite the awe and obedience of a stern fanaticism, with the flowing dissoluteness of pious libertinism. Deities, at once lascivious and cruel, are to be propitiated by correspondent ceremonies and rites. The allurements of beauty are to be occasionally forgotten in the sacrifice of blood; and the votary is to mingle the impressions of holy obscenity, with the fears or frenzy of a sanguinary superstition.

I. The rites of the funeral pile are considered as of especial importance in the Braminical religion. The widow, decorated for the occasion in magnificent robes, is led with mysterious solemnity to the scene of her suffering or of his glory. Thrice is she conducted round the pile on which is placed the body of her departed husband. An antient Bramin accompanies her steps, and, watching her trepidations, admonishes her weakness, and dictates her prayers*. The aid of intoxicating drugs is occasionally employed to counteract the fears and emo-

* Orme. Hist. Milit. Transact. vol. i. Dissertat.

tions of nature ; and, according to the reluctance or acquiescence of the victim, the wrath or the blessing of the gods is announced by the inspired voice of the priest. When the instinctive terrors of the heart are thus mitigated or subdued, and the faith and fervour of superstition become complete, the dreadful solemnity is no longer delayed. The devoted woman is deprived of the ornaments of her dress. Her anklets, her rings, her bracelets, are distributed among her relatives. A few white flowers, the coronal of death, are twined in the jetty darkness of her hair. The flames are kindled, sometimes by her own hand. The unfeeling multitude behold, with shouts of exultation, the hideous solemnity. The shriek of the expiring sufferer is drowned in the dissonance of unnumbered voices ; and the countenance, perhaps, of supplication and agony, and

The arms, contracted, now, in fruitless strife,

Now wildly at full length

Towards the crowd in vain for pity spread,*

are witnessed by the surrounding fanatics, not with the compassion of men, but with the delight of monsters †.

Sacrifices of this kind are encouraged by all the artifices of superstition, and of the priesthood. The Suttee, or highest sphere of felicity, is the place, according to the holy books of the Bramin, destined for the immortal residence of those who have burned themselves with their husbands ‡. To the hope of recompense which is thus excited, is superadded the

* I borrow willingly from a beautiful passage in the Curse of Kehama.

† Appendix, Note L. L.

‡ Preface to Code of Gentoo Laws, p. 48.

fear or certainty of punishment for disobedience. The widow who declines the rite, stains her name with deep and indelible infamy. She is supposed to have been guilty, in some preceding state, of conjugal infidelity; and nothing remains to expiate her guilt, but a long series of purifying austerities, to be terminated only by a natural or voluntary death*.

But the husband is not merely to be accompanied to the other world by his devoted wife. If he have been of any distinguished character and name, the servants and the slaves of his household must also perish at the pile†. Accordingly, the favourite attendants of the deceased are seen on some occasions to rival the example of the expiring widow. Maddened by fanaticism or by opium, or compelled by the hard necessity of their lot, they dance frantically round the pile, pour loud lamentations to the shade of the dead, and gradually approach the flames, till their light and flying garments catch the fire, and a new spectacle, adding the sacrifice of humble duty to that of conjugal attachment, is exhibited to the holy and vociferous brutality of the populace‡.

It might be supposed that the more benignant influence of the British government, and the manners and humanity promoted by British civilization, had tended to relax or extinguish a superstition at once

* Ayeen Akberry, iii. p. 172.

† When Savagi, the founder of the present race of Moralloes, died, the funeral rites were distinguished by the same sacrifices which accompanied the obsequies, the year before, of Maha Rajah of Jondpore. The servants, and wives, and animals, belonging to the household of the deceased, were burned with his corpse. Orme. Hist. Fragm. p. 261. Renaudot. Ancienn. Relat. p. 33.

‡ Renaudot. Ancienne Relat. p. 33.

so cruel and so absurd. But the religion of Brama admits no change in its rites or doctrines. Instances have recently occurred of these oblations of conjugal respect, which vie with the examples of the elder periods of the Hindu faith ; and of the twelve wives of a Koolin Bramin, who had died at the age of ninety-two, three were lately found to claim the glories of sacrifice, and were accordingly consigned to the flames, “ amid the din of drums and of cymbals, and the shouts of the Bramins*.”

II. To the rites, celebrated more especially at Juggernaut, in honour of Sheeva and Vishnu, divinities equally carnal and sanguinary, we turn from these hideous oblations only to contemplate new and perhaps more appalling enormities. To that scene of barbarous superstition, multitudes of votaries annually resort, and tribes of fanatics, with clotted hair, and painted flesh, and tattered garments, are seen to mingle in the hideous solemnities, and to impose on themselves the saving inflictions of an austere, unnatural, and barbarous penance. At the prescribed moment, the idol divinity, a block of stone or wood, with a frightful visage and a distended and blood-coloured mouth, is slowly and solemnly brought forward from the temple in which he had been enshrined, and hailed by the holy and frantic acclamations of the assembled populace. The god, seated on a magnificent throne, is borne along, by the strength of a thousand arms, in a ponderous and gorgeous car. His mantle of gold tissue, the splendid diamonds substituted for eyes, the costly necklace of gems which descends upon his bosom, his rich bracelets of rubies and pearls, and the golden glory

* Appendix, Note M. M.

which radiates over his head, excite the wonder and provoke the adoration of the tribes which encompass him. At a little distance from the temple, which, illuminated by the blaze of innumerable lamps, reveals to the eyes of both sexes the abominable emblems in massy sculpture which cover its walls, the high priest assumes his place in front of the god; and, having commanded the silent attention of the crowd, recites aloud, with corresponding gestures, a series of stanzas calculated, by the pruriency of the poet, to inflame the passions and libertinism of the worshipper. A boy, selected for his beauty, succeeds and rivals this venerable teacher of sensuality, and chants, and embellishes with faithful gesticulation, a new song of pious obscenity. An aged minister, waving a rod with wanton and undisguised indecency, completes the scandal of this shocking, degrading, and disgusting exhibition.

The period of the sacrifice has now arrived. The massy carriage of the idol ceases to move. A frantic votary, decorated with wreaths of flowers, approaches from among the applauding and revering multitude, and, having sung the praises of the idol, casts himself, with a cry of fanaticism, beneath the wheels of the car. Instantly the machine again begins to move, and the miserable victim is crushed to death, or irrecoverably mangled by the incumbent weight. A shout of universal and joyous frenzy attests the completion of this first sacrifice; and the wild idolatry of the multitude anticipates, with exulting expectation, the favour and the aid of the conciliated deity.

These solemnities sometimes continue for many days. The god wants neither votaries nor victims. The immortal glories of martyrdom are emulously,

and, it is thought, cheaply purchased with blood. Reiterated oblations excite the awe of the wondering populace; and the national piety is attested and vindicated by the sanguinary repasts afforded to the carnal appetite of the god *.

It is not at Juggernaut alone that rites of this disgusting character are annually celebrated. Allahabad, "the king of fortified places," and whose territory is particularly holy, also enjoys the idol of blood, the sculptured temple, the massy car, the savage worshippers, and the self-devoted victims. In the view of a Christian government, fanaticism plays its melancholy pranks with as little restraint as in the most distant region of India; and the temper of a people, on other occasions so pacific and gentle, can not be induced to surrender, for a moment, solemnities so pernicious in principle, and so shocking and degrading in practice †.

The idols which are thus worshipped, are not fed and indulged merely with human blood. We are tempted to smile when we are informed of the costly provision that is made for their table, their decoration, and their pleasures. They have their garbs of state, their gorgeous car, their sculptured temples, their zealous menials, their pampered steeds, their mighty elephants, and their beautiful and voluptuous nymphs. They are surrounded by the pomp of a powerful priesthood, and the fascinations of youthful and contributory courtezans; and their hungry appetites are supplied with as much earnestness by the offerings of their votaries, as their portentous cruelty is in-

* Appendix, Note N. N.

† Ayeen Akberry, vol. ii. p. 35, and vol. iii. p. 124.

dulged by the fanaticism and insanity of human sacrifice*.

III. The zeal of the votary of the East is fomented by an institution yet more mischievous and cruel; and the rites of pilgrimage, described as essential to temporal and eternal welfare, are to suspend the performances of active virtue, and, like pestilence and war, to thin, in their accomplishment, the ranks of life. An ardent climate, dreary and burning plains, the danger of disease and famine by the way, afford no justification to the imperfect zealot who has neglected to visit, from whatever distance, the more solemn scenes of idol worship. The duties of society, the generous and endearing offices of domestic intercourse, and the humanizing association of kindred and of friends, are to be sacrificed to an obligation not merely useless in its nature, but deplorable in its effects. Sometimes the journey of the pilgrim, retarded by sickness, by want, or by the ceaseless austerities of penance, consumes half his life; and he traverses India, that he may enjoy the holy delight of contemplating before he dies the devotional barbarities of the temple of Juggernaut. Of the multitudes who thus annually desert their occupations and their homes, many expire from exhaustion and misery on their journey, and many within the gates of the consecrated city. "We knew," says Buchanan, "that we were approaching Juggernaut, and we were yet forty miles from it, by the human bones which we saw strewed by the way†." Toil and famine are not the only destructive agents in these journeyings of insane devotion. The unburied bodies of the

* Appendix, Note O. O.

† Christian Researches, 129, 134, 135.

dead, exposed to the heat of a vertical sun, frequently generate contagion, by their putrescence, and numbers of the credulous and submissive multitude are swept rapidly away. The living, hardened by fanaticism, and by the spectacles of horror which perpetually surround them, behold their companions expiring on every side without alarm and without compassion; and instances have occurred, too dreadful almost for description, of the utter insensibility with which the most afflictive sufferings are endured or beheld*. Even when the pilgrimage has been completed, yet greater trials, if possible, await the devotee. He has to re-traverse the wilds which he had already passed, and to re-endure, but with diminished strength, the wants which he had already experienced. Under these circumstances the waste of human life augments; and of the tribes, including hundreds of thousands of miserable beings who migrate yearly from the plains, the villages, and the cities of India, to celebrate the orgies of their homicidal divinity, it may be justly affirmed that one half never reach their home, and that those who are more fortunate bring back feebleness and disease, the natural fruits of such a journey, or a fanaticism stimulated and inflamed, the natural result of such a worship †.

IV. For the maintenance of a superstition of this nature, a priesthood is established worthy of the duties which it is required to fulfil. The members of

* Appendix, Note P. P.

† Doctor Buchanan says, that the pilgrims who annually resort to the holy city amount to hundreds of thousands, or to a multitude, out of which a hundred thousand would not be missed. *Christ-Research*. p. 141.

this body, always chosen from the first order of the state, enjoy the double reverence due to the dignity of their rank, and the sanctity of their office. They are the sole expositors of religion, and the sole directors of its solemnities. The sacred books are open only to their inspection, and their infallible interpretations are to be embraced, with equal humility, by the highest and the lowest of mankind *.

These men are supported in unpriestly luxury by the contributions of bigots, of pilgrims, and of devotees. Every thing in the superstition over which they preside, is formed to perpetuate the sacerdotal slavery of the people. They are to administer rites which have been artfully contrived to constitute an essential part of the transactions of common life, and to excite the awe, the reverence, and the zeal of the people. It is by their permission the votary is to enjoy the secret pleasures of the temple, or by their voice that the real or supposed impiety of men is to be proclaimed or denounced; and their sanctified authority has extended itself with such dominant influence to the heads of families, that they govern the people with irresistible despotism, and actuate and move them to good and evil as they please †.

This consecrated despotism may be sometimes mildly employed. The priest, like the generality of his countrymen, may be of a sober and gentle cast, and the temper which he derives from his climate

* "The religion was so intricate in its doctrines, and so alarming in its denunciations, as to require a Bramin to be at hand to explain and comment." Holwel. Hist. Events. Part ii. ch. iv. p. 17.

† Holwel. Histor. Relat. Part ii. ch. iv.

may contribute to soften the exercise of his authority, and to render him indulgent, and even accessory, to the enjoyments of the faithful. But occasions frequently arrive to call forth his most tremendous powers. He becomes not an inquisitor to imprison or to rack, and he pretends not to touch the life of his victim. But he establishes an irresistible government within the bosom of man. He shapes or he subdues opinion. He prostrates, he interdicts, he maddens the offender. Rajahs, and kings, and people, are alike controlled by the opinions which he instils. He annuls the privileges of humanity by depriving the individual of the privileges of his caste; and he pronounces the decree of excommunication which shuts out the object of his wrath from the pale of society, and from the mercies and consolations of religion.

The members of this class are placed as on the pinnacle of the state. It would be a degradation to their superior rank and sanctity to eat at the same table with nobles or with kings*. The food prepared by a person of an inferior caste must not defile the sacred purity of their lips†. While every other individual of the state is liable to the last punishment of the law, the law is to them as an inferior ordinance; and whatever be their crime, their persons are sacred, and their blood must not be shed‡. They are armed

* Orme's Hist. of Hindost. Dissertat. vol. i. p. 4. Sketches of the History of Hindost. &c. p. 113.

† A Bramin must not eat any thing which has been prepared or touched by any hand but that of a Bramin. Orme. Milit. Transact. Dissertat. vol. i. p. 4.

‡ "Never shall a king slay a Bramin, though he be convicted of all possible crimes. No greater crime is known on earth than slaying a Bramin." Laws of Menu, Sir William Jones' Works,

with the panoply of heaven, and the wrath of heaven is treasured for their foes. It is not in the concerns of religion only that their decisions are to be heard. In public affairs their authority has been long and often implicitly admitted; kings are to acquire, by their blessing or consecration, conquest, dominion, glory, length of days, and immortal fame*; and they have been known to punish the prince who has slighted their remonstrances or violated the laws of his caste, sometimes with deposition and sometimes with death †.

It is not difficult to ascertain the degree of moral or religious utility which belongs to a priesthood of this character. The authority of the priest is founded on the ignorance of the people, and he therefore closes the divine pages of his sacred books to every eye but his own. The very offices in which his ministry is principally occupied, must affect the nature and tendency of his instructions, even where he wishes to instruct. He who presides over the choirs of wantonness, and receives the contributions of impurity, cannot consistently denounce the indulgence of sensual appetites, or enforce the obligation of moral restraint. He who publicly recites, and labours to impress on the minds of his hearers, the coarse and unqualified stanzas of obscenity, must beware in his exhortations, if he ever exhort, of impeaching the spirit of his own example. And he who avows the sanguinary temper of his gods, and requires to ap-

vol. vii. p. 392. Code of Hindu Laws, ch. xxi. § 10. pp. 275, 283. See also, sanguinary Chapter in the Calica Purana. Asiat. Research. vol. v. p. 371.

* Colebrook on the Vedas. Asiat. Research. vol. viii. p. 463.

† Preface to Code of Gentoo Laws, pp. 102, 116.

pease them the sanguinary sacrifice, may not prudently enforce the lessons of a sound and rational piety, or the precepts of a liberal and generous humanity.

V. Of the Castes, a division of the people peculiarly favourable to the exercise of priestly authority, the rank and functions of each are specified, with pious and reverential minuteness, in the sacred books of the Hindus. The first of these Orders is that of wisdom, and is set apart to teach and to pray. The second is that of authority, and is appointed to govern in peace and war. The third is to provide and multiply the necessaries of life by agriculture and trade. And the fourth, that of subjection, is to labour and to obey. No individual of the three last orders can hope, by any virtue, or any acquirement, to ascend in the scale of this mechanical society*. By crime, indeed, or rather by a deviation from arbitrary and oppressive forms, of which the priest is to judge, the privileges of caste may be lost†. Or, if the guilt of the individual should be deemed to merit a punishment yet more severe, the offender is excluded, by sacerdotal anathema, even from the

* Ayeen Akberry, iii. 81, &c. Sketches of the History, &c. of the Hindus, p. 107.

† It may be lost by misfortune. In the year 1766, as reported by Major Scott Waring, a Hindu had been compelled, by a most unpardonable act of violence in two young officers, to swallow a drop of beef broth. His caste was consequently forfeited. The British government solicited the priesthood to restore it. The Bramins held two councils on the subject; and, after an anxious investigation, they declared to Lord Clive, that, however ardent they were to comply with his desire, they could find no precedent to justify the act, and could not, therefore, restore the forfeited caste. The unfortunate sufferer died soon after of a broken heart. See Quarterly Review, No. i. p. 208.

lowest rank, and from all human intercourse, except with those who have become outcasts like himself. No sorrow, no penance, no virtue, can restore the individual to the caste from which he has been expelled. The law which condemns is inexorable and eternal; and this law becomes a new instrument of oppression in the hand of the priest, because it consigns to him the power of excommunication, from which there is no appeal, and by which the victim whom he designs to oppress is reduced to the last state of vileness, of misery, and of contempt.

The functions of the Castes are determined in as arbitrary a manner as the Castes themselves. Though persons of a higher order may engage in the occupations of a lower, those of a lower must never intermeddle with the occupations of a higher. It would be impiety in a Bice or a Sooder, of the most flagrant and enormous character, to interfere with the offices of a Chatteree or a Bramin; but the Bramin and the Chatteree may engage without crime in the meaner profession of an inferior class*. The privilege, however, is rarely exercised, because the exercise is supposed to involve a certain, though not punishable, degree of degradation; and the law of the Castes may be, therefore, said to render society stationary in all its ranks, and to restrict and oppress the genius of improvement, by a wanton, absurd, and despotic interdiction.

The Castes are not only limited in their functions, but restricted in the ordinary intercourse of life. They scarcely associate, and never intimately, with each other. The priest, or the noble, would be considered as defiled if he descended to eat at the

* Appendix, Note Q. Q.

same table with the despised individual of an inferior rank. There are no charities or attachments of kindred to connect, because there is no marriage permitted between, the different orders*. Even the natural relation of man to man is to give way to the cold and artificial forms of the Castes ; and the rights of humanity are to be abridged or abrogated by the perverse rules of a priestly policy†.

The distinction of the castes, as I have observed, is guarded and maintained by religious terror. The priest is to judge and to decide, to spare or to punish ; but even the soother, even the lowest individual of the lowest caste, is a monarch, compared with the wretch on whose head has descended the full malignity of priestly malediction. He is driven, unpitied and scorned, from the confines of human society. If he approach, however accidentally, a person of a high rank, he may be instantly put to death. Whatever he touches is defiled. His very shadow as it sweeps along, his very breath as it issues from his lips, communicate impurity. Even religion withholds from him, for ever, her pity and her forgiveness. An irrevocable decree closes against him the temple of his gods ; or if, impelled by a religious feeling, he have stolen, in trembling silence, into the recesses of the pagoda, the detection of the crime excites the execration of priest and

* One of the most flagitious crimes, in the opinion of the priestly Bramin, is the intermarriage of persons of different castes. For this offence they and their offspring are degraded into the lowest order of society. Preface to Code of Hindu Laws, pp. 46, 49. The guilt of heresy only is punished with greater rigour.

† Bernier, tom. ii. p. 102. Tavernier, tom. i. liv. ii. c. 9. Ancquetil. Disc. Prelim. p. 81. Sketches of the Hist. &c. of the Hindus, p. 96. Dow's Hist. Hindost. Dissertat. p. 28.

people, the temple is to be purified by various observances, and the miserable outlaw is driven back, with horror and disgust, to the seclusion of the woods*. Of such a despotism the consequences are as mischievous as they are extensive. Terror and slavery are every where. Faith is subdued into the most implicit and servile submission. The fear of an irresistible excommunication prostrates the mind and spirit of the votary ; and the authority of the priest becomes the degradation, abasement, and oppression, of the people.

If we here pause to take a general view of the rites and ceremonies of the Hindu religion, we shall have occasion only to lament and condemn. The festival that is wanton, the ceremony that is obscene, the sacrifice that is terrific, the observance that is barbarous, will testify the absurdity, the craft, or the crime of the inventor. We shall behold the girl of the temple, contrasted with the exhausted or expiring pilgrim ; the scene of sanctified licentiousness, with altars dripping with human blood ; the flaming pile, with temples of debauch ; the gay procession, with the horrors of Juggernaut ; and a prostrate nation, with a pampered, a mischievous, and a despotic priesthood. The distinctions of the castes will be seen, restraining invention, repressing co-operation, confining effort, and suspending improvement ; and the power of excommunication will appear before us, rising up like a mighty and

* Sonnarat. tom. i. pp. 55, 56. Ayeen Akberry, v. iii. p. 243. The excommunication survives the life of the offender. His posterity are to be visited by the same interdict, and are rendered incapable of ever recovering the caste of which he has been deprived. Dow's Hist. Hindost. Dissert. p. 22.

portentous spectre, to appal, to subdue, and to mould, the minds of men. Every where some new evidence will occur of the detestable nature of a ritual, which, for so many centuries, has commanded the veneration and regulated the faith of nations, and in which its advocates among ourselves have pretended to find so much excellence and beauty ; and, instead of discovering any thing to satisfy us of the competence of human reason to frame a pure and adequate creed, we shall retire from the contemplation still more diffident of such a guide in such concerns, and still more convinced of the necessity of an inspired religion.

SECT. III.

Fasts and pilgrimages ordained by the Koran—Essential to salvation—Compromise for fasts—Minute and insignificant forms of observance—Toils, manners, and duties of the pilgrims—The black stone—The stoning of the devils—Moral and political consequences of the institution—The Mahometan priesthood—The people uninstructed—The whole calculated rather to kindle the zeal of a mischievous fanaticism, than to promote piety to God or love to man.

THE two most useful, and, perhaps, sublime of the intellectual faculties, invention and foresight, have been lavishly ascribed to Mahomet, by the partiality of his eulogists. Yet in no eminent degree was he possessed of either. Invention creates, foresight anticipates. The last, with a prophetic vision, penetrates into the future, and detects the emergencies and difficulties which are hereafter to arise ; the first, with a productive energy, supplies the means by which those difficulties may be met or subdued. But the prophet of Arabia invented little. He borrowed the materials of his edifice equally

from the wisdom and folly of preceding times, or the rites and ceremonies of existing superstition; and the records of the Pentateuch, the fables of the Talmud, the truths of the Gospel, the customs, manners, prejudices, and barbarities of the cotemporaneous Arab, supplied him with the incongruous doctrines which alternately disgrace and adorn the pages of the Koran. Nor was he gifted with any extraordinary foresight. He adapted his religion to circumstances as they arose, but made little provision for circumstances that were to come. Hence his celestial visitant was to contradict at one time what he had revealed at another; and the injunctions of the eternal book became innumerable, which, however authoritatively proclaimed, were, subsequently, to be limited, extended, or annulled, according as new occurrences required new expedients, and unforeseen conjunctures arose to derange the schemes of the Prophet.

Of the two great institutions of the Koran, fasting and pilgrimage, almost every circumstance, even to the minutest forms, was borrowed from the rituals of other creeds. Mahomet could boast only the merit of impressing upon them a greater degree of solemnity, and of supporting them by higher and more effectual sanctions.

I. Fasting, said the Prophet, "is as the gate of religion; and the odour of the mouth of him who fasteth is more grateful to God than that of musk*." In conformity with this doctrine, the necessity of solemn and reiterated fasts has been announced by the Koran; and days, and weeks, and months, are every year to be set apart by the Mussulman

* Sale. Prelim. Disc. sect. i. p. 48.

for the punctilious performance of the duties of abstinence. If the fast have unfortunately been neglected at the appointed season, atonement must be made to the law by "fasting a like number of days at another period*." The slightest indulgence, from the moment "when a white thread can be distinguished from a dark, till the hour of sun-set," might vitiate the whole virtue of the observance†. The saving efficacy is in the mode, not in the principle, in the punctiliousness of the performance, and not in the temper of the heart. The fast is not holy and efficacious according to the spirit with which it is observed, but, according as the day or month, during which it is observed, is holy or common‡. The very air during its continuance must not be too freely breathed, nor even the communications of speech indulged||; and the most learned of the Mahomedan doctors maintain that it is rendered inoperative and unholy, by circumstances which, in the estimate of common sense, would be considered as utterly disconnected with the duties of man, but which they enumerate and magnify with punctilious piety and sectarian zeal§.

The Koran, however, is, on this subject, singularly inconsistent and contradictory. The obligation of frequent and formal fasts was enforced by numerous

* Koran, chap. ii. p. 33.

† Koran, ch. ii.

‡ "It is an admitted tradition, that a fast of one day in a sacred month, is better than a fast of thirty days in another month; and that the fast of one day in Râhmadan is more meritorious than a fast of thirty days in a sacred month." Sale. Prel. Disc. sect. iv. p. 150.

|| "I have vowed a fast to the Omnipotent, and therefore I cannot speak to a man this day." Kor. ch. xix. vol. ii. p. 131.

§ Appendix, Note R. R.

precepts and reiterated sanctions ; and was classed among the highest of those duties which are indispensably necessary to the salvation of the sinner. Yet an ordinance so solemnly and emphatically enjoined, may, it seems, be omitted by the faithful Mussulman, at the expense of a slight and easy penalty. " Those who can keep the fast and do not, must redeem their neglect by maintaining of a poor man *." The act of charity is not required as a duty, but prescribed as a mulct. The fulfilment of one obligation is to atone for the contempt or disregard of another ; and the votary is instructed to enter into a composition with God, and to believe that, however this imperfection of his abstinence may have merited the punishment of disobedience, he possesses, in an act of mercy, a supererogatory treasure to make satisfaction for his frailty.

The most zealous and learned of the commentators on the Koran are disturbed by this tenet, and they utterly and justly deny the doctrine of composition which it seems to affirm. They have, therefore, exercised all their ingenuity to rescue their prophet from the contradiction of, at once, requiring the observance, and authorizing the neglect, of one of his most solemn and essential institutions ; but, after having tried every artifice of sophistry on the original text which has created the difficulty, they have been compelled to abandon their purpose altogether, and to shelter themselves and their religion under the convenient doctrine of celestial abrogation †.

* Kor. ch. ii. pp. 32, 33. " By maintaining of a poor man ;" according to the usual quantity which a man eats in a day, and the custom of the country. Sale. Note. Koran. ch. ii. pp. 32, 33.

† Sale. Note on Kor. ch. ii. p. 32.

II. To the ordinance of fasts, the Koran has added the institution of pilgrimage. "Perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, in the known months let it be performed, and remember God the appointed number of days in the valley of Mina—Proclaim unto the people a solemn pilgrimage; let them come unto thee on foot, and on every lean camel, arriving from every distant road, that they may be witnesses of the advantage arising from visiting the holy place, and that they may pay their vows, and compass the holy house*." In the performance of this duty, from which even female feebleness is not exempt, every true disciple of Islam is faithful and exemplary.* Once at least in their lives, the most unthinking of the moslems bend their knees on the sacred steps of the Caaba; but the more scrupulous and pious votaries frequently resort, from the most distant regions, to that consecrated temple. "It was there that God gave the site of the house, for an abode unto Abraham;" and "there is the scene of the venerable Arafat and the holy mountain†." Patriarchs, and saints, and prophets, the primitive guides and teachers of mankind, walked and dwelt in those divine precincts. Celestial communications imparted there the precepts of life; and, there "the last and best" of the prophets planted the standard of

* Koran. ch. ii. pp. 35, 36. Kor. ch. xxii. p. 170.

† Arafat is a mountain near Mecca. When Adam was driven out of paradise, he fell on the distant and desert island of Serendib or Ceylon, while the unhappy Eve was conducted to Jodda. At length the father of men, having mitigated the wrath of God by his repentance, was led by the angel Gabriel to the mount of Arafat, where the long lost Eve was again restored to her husband. Hence the holy character of the mountain. D'Herbelot. Bibl. Oriental. p. 55.

Islem. Inflamed by these representations, the pilgrim proceeds from every part of the empire of the Mussulmans, to that memorable scene ; and his piety is exercised with more exalted devotion on a spot where every object wears a sacred impress in his imagination, and where the most affecting monuments of divine power and wisdom tend to purify his meditations and elevate his faith.

Various were the painful or ludicrous observances required of the pilgrim, prior and subsequent to his pilgrimage, and during its continuance. He was to prepare for his holy wanderings by a long and rigid seclusion, and to exercise his piety on the way by numerous and afflicting austerities *. On his arrival at a certain distance from "the house wherein are " manifested signs," his piety was to display itself in the squalidness of his garb, and the neglect of his person †. His nails, his beard, and his hair, were to remain uncut until "he had fulfilled his vow ;" and he was to enter the sacred territory with his head bare, and with a perfect heedlessness of every thing but the awful duties in which he was engaged.

On his arrival at Mecca, the wearied but sedulous votary is to commence a new series of pious observances. Seven times, beginning at the consecrated stone ‡ at the corner of the temple, he must proceed to encompass the wide extent of the Caaba ; three

* To these austerities was frequently to be added hunger and thirst. Whatever might be his want of food, he was prohibited from the profane occupation of fowling and hunting, and permitted only to fish. Kor. ch. v. Sale, Prelim. Disc. sect. iv.

† The pilgrims deem it a breach of the injunctions of their prophet to destroy the vermin, which multiply from neglect and dirt on their person. Sale. Prel. Disc. sect. iv.

‡ Appendix, Note S. S.

times in a short and hurried step, and four times in a more grave and measured pace. Seven times, also, he must traverse the plain between the sacred mounts of Safa and Merva, and, according to the well known ritual of the solemnity, sometimes in a slow, and sometimes in a hasty manner, and occasionally pausing to look back as if on some object of solicitude or alarm *. These preliminary duties are to be succeeded by other and yet more important observances. Prayers are to be repeated over the stone which bears the print of the feet of Abraham. The well of Zemzem is to be visited, and to yield its healing draughts to the lips of the pilgrim. And, finally, on the day prescribed, and after having passed the preceding night in holy contemplation in the oratory of Mozdaliza, the votary is to hasten before sun-rise to the valley of Mina, to throw seven stones to repel the intrusion of evil spirits †, to slay the victims of sacrifice, to cut his hair and his nails, and bury the portions so separated on the spot ‡, and, at length, to prepare and enjoy the feast which is to renovate his health after so many toils, and complete the duties and the glory of his pilgrimage ||.

* Appendix, Note T. T.

† Doctor Pocock, from Al Ghazali, says seventy stones at different times. The Indians of Chili, at their funeral rites, stroke the ground with their spears, to drive away evil spirits. Molina. Hist. Chili. vol. ii. Append. 2.

‡ Sale. Prel. Disc. p. 160.

|| For a more particular enumeration of these ceremonies, I refer to Chardin, *Voyage de Perse*. tom. ii. p. 440 Pitt on the Relig. of the Mahometans, p. 92. Gagnier *Vie de Mahom.* tom. ii. p. 258. Abulfeda, *Vit. Mahom.* p. 190. Reland de Relig. Mahom. p. 113. Sale. Prelim. Disc. sect. iv. *Anciennes Relat. des Indes*, and D'Herbelot, *Bibl. Orientel.* Pocock *In Spec. Hist. Arab.* p. 115, &c.

These rites are prescribed and these ceremonies imposed with an explicitness of command, either traditionary or written, which leaves nothing to the will of voluntary performance. The slightest omission is sufficient to vitiate the great work of the pilgrimage; and the pilgrim is to rely on the saving efficacy of performances which, instead of being consistent with sober piety or sound reason, are, in their tendency and influence, a mockery of both.

Of such institutions the effects cannot but extend to all the social, and all the individual interests of mankind. Industry is to be relaxed, and the duties of life suspended, for barren, pernicious or whimsical observances. A considerable portion of the age of man is to be occupied in forms and ceremonies, which, however they may accord with the fanaticism of the sectary, have little to do with the virtues of the citizen; and, while he who should be habituated to salutary labour, is to waste his days in the journeyings and the austerities of pilgrimage, the true energy of the human character is impaired or lost, and bigotry and fanaticism are substituted in the heart of the votary for piety and virtue.

III. Of a religion abounding with so many observances, and occupying in its rites so great a portion of the life of its disciples*, the priesthood contributes but little to the diffusion of piety or morals. The prophet himself not only communicated to his tribes the infallible doctrines which he had received from heaven, but attended in the mosques, united with the congregation in prayer, ascended the pulpit†, and delivered the exhortation, in which he mingled the promises of glory to the victorious Mussulman,

* Appendix, Note U. U.

† Appendix, Note V. V.

with the menaces of woe to the devoted infidel. On the practice, rather than on the precept*, of that chosen instrument of celestial wisdom, a priestly order has been founded by his successors, for the maintenance and advancement of public devotion. The duties of this body are to watch over the consecrated founts, to unite in acts of worship with the people, to remind the Mussulman, from the minarets of the mosques, of the returning periods of diurnal prayer, and, occasionally, to read, and perhaps expound, the awful tenets of the Koran. The priesthood, however, has never extended beyond the more important districts of the Mahomedan empire. Places of devotion are every where erected, and the people resort to them for prayer; but, in countless instances, there is no religious teacher to be found†; and, if the gesture and countenance of the generality of Mussulmen exhibit a high degree of religious solemnity, if every worshipper have his string of beads, and pious ejaculations be heard on every side‡, the devotion at least is ignorant or impure, and the zeal and fervour are the offspring, not of the wisdom communicated by the ministers of religion, but of a weak, implicit, and ignorant credulity.

Such are the most remarkable of the rites and institutions of the religion of the Koran. I pause not to expatiate on the principles which they involve, or on the effects which they produce. It will scarcely be

* Appendix, Note W. W.

† “The professors of the Mohammedan law neither preach nor catechise, nor confess; and the vulgar, therefore, receive no religious instruction, except in the common schools to which their parents can afford to send them.” Volney, *Trav. In Syria*, ch. xxxix.

‡ Appendix, Note X. X.

affirmed, that they promote one wholesome persuasion, or inculcate or encourage a single duty. They were not designed, nor are they calculated, to instruct and purify the heart; and they tend only to found the hopes of acceptance with God on the minute observance of forms, not merely external, but often extravagant and absurd. They are, therefore, at variance with sound, sober, and salutary truth; they corrupt, while they exercise, human faith; and the votary, who should have been disciplined in religious wisdom, admits and observes them only to become a more zealous and worthless devotee, and a more implicit and bigoted fanatic.

SECT. IV.

Religious rites, tests of the truth of a religion—The four great ordinances of the Gospel—Baptism—Its nature and object—A conditional covenant—An institution of grace and mercy—The Lord's supper—Under what circumstances ordained—The blessings which it confers—The preparation which it requires—Its moral and holy tendency—Ordinance of the Sabbath—Comparison of the Sabbath of the Jew with that of the Christian—Objects of the latter—Rest, devotion, charity, instruction—Consequences on the order, the decency, and the civilization of life—Tendency to unite mankind in closer bonds of affection and brotherhood—The Christian priesthood—Established by Christ—Its nature and design—Different Orders—Their specific duties—The virtues of the Christian priest—The prescribed mode of his teaching—The testimony of Julian—Beauty and excellence of the institution.

IF the Deity were to condescend to become the legislator of man, we should expect to discover, in his ordinances, the character of perfect wisdom, and eternal utility. He, whose omniscience beholds all the relations and consequences of things, cannot err. He, whose goodness is equal to his glory and

his power, can require the obedience of his creatures only to promote their happiness. The idle and vain parade of splendid ceremonies, and the burdensome imposition of unedifying rites, can have nothing to do with the operations or designs of such a Being. Whatever He ordains is the mingled annunciation of his wisdom to guide, his beneficence to bless, and his mercy to save; and the doctrine and the institution, perfectly accordant with each other, must involve the immediate improvement, or final felicity, of mankind.

By this test, in its utmost rigour, we consent that the Christian dispensation shall be tried. It is not merely the moral precept and religious doctrine which we submit to such a scrutiny, but the rites and institutions of the Gospel, in their reference to the nature and happiness of man. Are they in any wise inconsistent with the noblest of those doctrines which dignify and distinguish the Evangelical page? Let it, then, be admitted, that they are human in origin and in frailty, and that the religion which ordains them is human also. But should they be found to harmonize with the practical wisdom of the Gospel, and to be consonant, in tendency and effect, with that order and well being of mankind, which, we may humbly presume, it is the gracious will of the divine Being to confirm; we may, in this case, more confidently admit the high claims of the Christian dispensation, and here, also, perhaps, affirm the hand of God.

In a general view, the Christian religion appears to lay little stress on external rites. It prescribes to piety no idle forms. It demands no cruel or unavailing sacrifice. It requires no endurance of barbarous penance. It reserves not its mercies for

pilgrims, faquirs, and fanaticks. Designed, as is affirmed, to “ render men wise unto salvation,” it has cast aside every incumbrance of a severe yet useless ritual ; and, claiming the universal obedience of its disciples, it rejects all institutions which are partial and local in their nature, and all doctrines which refer, not to the welfare and dignity of man, but to the prejudices or customs of districts and of sects.

The Gospel, however, has established four ordinances of great importance, the sacrament of Baptism, the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, the institution of the Sabbath, and the service of the ministry. To these we mean to advert.

I. Prior to the time of John the Baptist, a form of baptism existed among the Jews, for the admission of the proselyte within the holy pale of their religion ; and the baptism of John succeeded, on the condition of repentance, as a prelude to that more solemn and significant rite which was speedily to be instituted by the divine Teacher whom he proclaimed and described.

The baptism of John was announced only in his own name, and in direct reference to the coming of Messiah. Whereas the baptism of Christ was the ordinance of the Messiah himself ; was to be conferred in the name, and by the authority, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; was to initiate the proselyted sinner into a new and more perfect covenant ; and was to communicate, to the faithful and contrite disciple, the celestial privileges of the Gospel of peace.

Christ himself, indeed, did not baptize ; but he enjoined and sanctioned the rite by frequent commands during the period of his ministry ; and, after

his resurrection, he repeated his injunctions with greater and more affecting solemnity, and sent forth his disciples to fulfil the duty which he had so explicitly prescribed. "Go ye, therefore, and teach and baptize all nations *."

On that occasion he may be said to have closed the sublime labours of his ministry. He had amply instructed his followers by precept and by example; had unfolded to them in clear and explicit terms the high destiny of human nature; had taught the august doctrine of redemption from sin, and regeneration by grace; and had finally ratified, by suffering and by blood, the faith which he had preached. Having thus fulfilled "the covenant of righteousness," he conferred his last commission on his disciples; and his disciples, no longer doubting that it was he who should redeem Israel, and impressed with the spirit of their divine Master, were to go forth, in the confidence of the authority with which they were invested, and admit to the sanctuary of the Gospel the instructed proselytes of all nations.

But the admission was no idle and formal ceremony. The Apostles were first to preach, and then to baptize. The Jew and the Gentile were to be primarily instructed in the doctrines of the new dispensation, and to be impressed with the necessity of repentance and of faith; and the administration of Baptism was to be the evidence of the edification, the purity, and the acceptance, of the convert.

It was to be more. It was to confirm, by an additional sanction, the indispensable obligation of future holiness and faith. The sprinkling of water which typified the purity of the convert, was to be accom-

* Matt. xxviii. 19.

panied by the real or virtual vow of Christian perseverance; and the high privileges which were conferred by the rite, were of no absolute and indelible character, except to those who fulfilled the conditions on which they were granted; for, "as
 " many as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were to
 " be baptized into his death, that, professing them-
 " selves his disciples, they might die unto sin as he
 " died unto sin, and live to him that rose for us
 " again*."

Such is the principle on which this rite was founded by the wisdom of the Gospel. The external form was not to supply, but to attest, the internal purity. The condition was to be inseparably connected with the benefit of the baptismal covenant, and, therefore, where the conditions were broken, the benefits were annulled†.

And the fulfilment of the condition is to be abundantly recompensed by the benefits received. For he who is baptized is not merely consecrated to the Gospel, but admitted to the privileges of the Gospel covenant. Becoming "a member of Christ, the
 " child of God and the inheritor of the kingdom of
 " heaven," he is united to that spiritual society of which Christ is the head, restored to the similitude of his Maker, which the bondage and corruption of sin had destroyed, and begotten into a lively hope, and to "an inheritance uncorruptible and undefiled,
 " and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens." Of such privileges and blessings it is not easy to express the extent and the importance; but that they

* 1 Pet. iv. 1, 2. See also, 2d Epist. to Corinth. v. 15, and Epist. to Romans vi. 4, 6.

† Appendix, Note Y. Y.

issue from one world to another, and involve the interests of time and the glories of eternity, will be sufficient to attest the celestial goodness by which they are promised and to be conferred*.

Baptism, then, is an institution of grace and mercy, intimately connected with piety and morals. It binds by the most solemn obligations, tenders the most important benefits, authorizes the sublimest hopes. It becomes, on the part of man, the pledge of obedience; on the part of God, of pardon and acceptance. It is the rite of peace, which restores the sinner to himself and to God. It is the rite of holiness, which consecrates the creature to his Creator, and opens to regenerated man the pale of the everlasting covenant.

The infidel himself has explicitly admitted the wisdom and the utility of this admirable ordinance. "No institution," he affirms, "can be imagined more simple, or more void of all those pompous rites and theatrical representations which abound in the religious worship of the heathen, than that of baptism in its origin. It is not only an innocent, but a profitable ceremony, because it is extremely proper to keep up the spirit of true natural religion, by keeping up that of Christianity, and to promote the observance of moral duties by marking a respect for the revelation that confirmed them†."

We agree with this writer. There is, indeed, in the rite which he extols, no pompous and theatrical representation. All is plain, intelligible, and interesting before us. If there be a vow, it is that of

* Coloss. ii. 19; Ephes. i. 22, 23; Coloss. iii. 4; 1 Corinth. xii. 13, &c.; Rom. v. 10; 1 John iii. 10; Pet. i. 3, 4.

† Bolingbroke's Works, 4to, vol. v. p. 302.

duty ; if there be a condition, it is that which connects present obedience with future blessedness ; if there be a stipulation, it is that which unites us more intimately to God, which strengthens virtue by a more solemn and affecting engagement, and which, while it contributes to the moral and intellectual improvement of man in one world, sustains and sanctifies the hope of his immortal destination in another.

II. If we now advert to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, we shall discover a new evidence of the wisdom with which the legislator of man adapted his institutions to the edification and happiness of man. Many were the awful and affecting circumstances under which that ordinance was announced. Christ foresaw that he was soon to be separated, by a painful death, from those whom he had chosen to share the labours of his ministry ; and the band who were issuing forth to insult and seize him, the hate of Pilate, the ignominious scourge, the procession of Calvary, the crown of thorns, the expiring agonies of the cross, were all clearly and distinctly before him. At such an hour it was, when the fortitude of the child of the world would have withered away, that our Saviour, unshaken and unappalled, sat down with his disciples to his last supper. There was a dignified affection in his words and actions, which might well have excited the love and reverence of his guests. " With desire," said he " have I desired " to eat this passover with you before I suffer* ; " and, then, instituting that sacrament by which the sacrifice of his death was to be commemorated through all ages of the Christian Church, he bade them a solemn and affecting farewell,—“ I say unto you, I shall

* Luke xxii. 15.

“ drink no more of this fruit of the vine, until the day when I shall drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom*.” Such was the last institution of the legislator of man! Conquerors and kings, great too often but by crime, demand temples and statues to perpetuate the glory acquired by deeds of blood. But a simple ordinance of affectionate commemoration was enough for Him who had communicated light and wisdom to the world, and was about to terminate a life consecrated to the service of mankind by the ignominious sufferings of the cross.

If he had been merely the patriot who had exercised his zeal for the welfare of his countrymen, or the benefactor who had multiplied to his country the blessings of order and of peace, he might justly have expected to live in the memory of his own, and of succeeding times. But the claim of Christ to the grateful recollection of mankind was of an incomparably higher character. He had communicated precepts which were to become not merely the edification of a period or of a realm, but the illumination of ages and of empires; and he was about to sacrifice his life, not for those who revered and loved him, but for those by whom he was rejected and decried. The very bigotry which led him to the place of skulls, participated his compassion and his blessings. For the very multitude who were to insult him in his last agonies, he was ready to pour forth his most benevolent and ardent prayer; and he was to purchase, at the expense of long and afflicting suffering, the salvation of an ungrateful and sinful world. If there be any thing worthy of the affectionate and eternal recollection of mankind, it is surely here to be found.

* Matt. xvi. 29.

If there be an institution which merits the reverence and observance of all times, it is surely that which is designed to commemorate the virtues of this august and gracious character, and the blessings procured to the world by the holy labours of his mission, and the saving magnanimity of his death.

But the sacrament of the Lord's Supper derives not its solemnity and importance solely from the circumstances by which its institution was accompanied, or the authority by which its observance was enjoined. By the wisdom of the founder, it was designed to refer to objects worthy, in the highest degree, of the consideration of mankind. It renews, but extends to the whole world, the paschal feast of the Israelites. It points to the consummation of the types and figures of preceding times. It announces the termination of sanguinary sacrifice. It invites all men, as the members of one great and affectionate family, to partake, with the same privileges and hopes, of the same blessing. It is, in a word, to reconcile man to God and to himself, to revivify those who are dead in trespasses and sins, to reopen the gates of heaven which had been closed by rebellion and by crime, and to tender to every individual of every age, "that bread and that cup, of which whosoever shall eat and drink worthily shall have everlasting life."

There is scarcely any view in which we can contemplate this holy ordinance, without moral or religious edification. Does it direct our thoughts to Christ, the friend of man? It urges us to obedience by gratitude and love. Does it exhibit in Christ the victim of the iniquities of man? It impresses us with an awful sense of the equity by which the victim was required. Does it remind us

of the love of God in sending forth his Son "to suffer death upon the cross for the redemption of man?" It directs our attention to the most affecting instance of the divine benignity, and tends to excite the best and most salutary sentiments of the heart. By these considerations are kindled, at once, the love, the reverence, and the awe of God. The deep and delightful impressions of the divine goodness are mingled with the awful and quickening conviction of the divine justice; and we learn to look up to the Almighty with a more solemn and affecting sense of the duty which we owe him, for the holy mercies of his gracious and redeeming interposition.

But let not the obdurate and impenitent sinner hope that this sacrament is to include him within the pale of its blessings. To such a man, if he dare to approach the altar of God, it brings not hope, nor trust, nor blessing, but wrath and condemnation. It is to be preceded by a preparation of the heart as solemn, as the benefits which are to flow from it are great and numerous. The vices and weaknesses of life must be called to view; the recesses of the bosom laid open to a just and profound scrutiny; and the sanctity of penitence must be substituted for the pollutions of passion and of crime. In this renewal or regeneration of the spirit of man, lies the first condition of the blessings which are to be subsequently communicated. The condition may be painful and hard to be fulfilled; for what sinner can lay without effort the oblation of every impure and worldly passion on the altar, and mingle with the offering the tears of a deep and salutary contrition? But it is accompanied by high and noble promises; and motives are supplied which facilitate its accom-

plishment by encouraging the efforts of reformation, and counteracting the temptations to crime.

This preparatory purification of the spirit, this alienation of the sinner from himself, this return of the wanderer to the fold of the shepherd, are not the sole things necessary to the effectual participation of the Lord's Supper. A transitory piety, a sudden but ineffectual resolution of amendment, a penitence to be speedily extinguished amid the follies and levities of life, are not to bring down the blessings which await the evangelical communicant. To solemnize, at one moment, a sacrament so awful and holy, and to depart, on the next, from the obligations which it imposes and consecrates, is, on the contrary, more certainly to provoke the wrath, and assure the punishment, which that sacrament affords the means to appease and to avert. He, therefore, who would partake, with saving efficacy, the cup of salvation, must not only bring to the table of Christ holy and disciplined thoughts, but display them afterwards in newness of life. The heart that has been regenerated, must be preserved in a state of regeneration. The obedience which has been promised must be fulfilled. And thus, and thus only, shall a man be rendered "a meet partaker of this " holy sacrament," and be assured of the blessings and privileges which it confers.

There is, then, in this institution a sublime evidence of the wisdom and of the goodness of Christ. It is not announced as a mere trial of our obedience and our faith. It does not occupy us in the observance of any unmeaning or burdensome ceremony. It engages us in no idle and corrupting festivity. It holds out no hope of an easy pardon, and an unconditional acceptance. No ! In its origin it is affecting,

in its promises it is sublime, in its tendency holy, in its benefits unspeakable. It is calculated, by the views which it opens, the example which it commemorates, and the love which it witnesses, to elevate and to purify the mind. All the best and happiest emotions it contributes to awaken and confirm; all evil appetites, and all sordid attachment to the world, to repress or to reform; and it is not only calculated to give dignity to virtue, and strength to piety, and confidence to faith, and love to hope, but to become a means of reconciling man to his Maker, and of sanctifying, preserving, and redeeming the family of God.

III. From this beautiful institution we turn to contemplate another, scarcely less interesting and important, or less accordant with the improvement and happiness of man.

The ministry of Christ had been completed under circumstances the most afflicting and adverse, and the victim of the cross was laid in the grave. His religion seemed to be buried with him. His friends and disciples fled. His enemies exulted in fanatical triumph. In the mean time, his prediction was about to be fulfilled, and the temple, which had been cast down, was speedily to be restored. In three days he arose. The power of the Sanhedrim, the bigotry of the populace, the fanaticism of the rabbi, could do no more; and his mission was perfected, and the mystery of redemption sealed, by an event which demonstrated his triumph over the grave, and afforded the highest testimony to the truth of the Gospel.

The apostles of Christ, without departing from the primitive appropriation of one day in seven to the purposes of religion, set apart, with the same view, the day which had been distinguished by an occur-

rence so important and so sublime. To this Christian ordinance a reverence was due not inferior to that which was required by the Jewish sabbath. The sabbath of the Jew was of local ; this was to become of universal obligation. The first was to be a memorial of the creation of man ; the second was to be the memorial of his more merciful regeneration, and of his redemption from the bondage of sin and death. By the one, the people of a peculiar nation were taught to look back to the formation of things, when the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and the fair and magnificent form of nature arose from the darkness and confusion of chaos ; by the other, all mankind were to be referred to the event by which the great structure of salvation was perfected, and which exhibited Christ, after so many sufferings, triumphing over the powers of darkness and of death, and sealing the testimony of that religion of grace and mercy which was to proclaim " peace on earth, and good will to man." The sabbath, therefore, of the Jew and of the Christian, direct our contemplation to the most sublime or most affecting occurrences ; but the Christian sabbath, perhaps, would be thought to impress the heart with more animating motives, because it refers to higher mercies ; and to demand an observance more grateful and affectionate, because it points to fairer views of the compassionate goodness of the divine nature.

We learn from the example and precept of the holy personages by whom the Christian sabbath was ordained, that it was, in the first place, to be set apart as a day of rest. According to this intention, the occupations of the world are periodically to cease. They who have been, for the six preceding

days, immersed in the cares and troubles of temporal pursuits, are to enjoy a return of tranquillity, favourable to recollection, to wisdom, and to virtue. Even the beast of the field, exhausted in the service of his cruel or inconsiderate master, is to enjoy this common and salutary repose, and the oppressed is to benefit by the sabbath of the oppressor. But the rest which is thus enjoined, is not to be merely a rest from the ordinary business and toils of our lives. If it be criminal to devote the sabbath to works which, on every other day, may be necessary or lawful, it will be yet more so to profane it by the vain and wanton engagements of secular pleasure. The sabbath was made for man, not for his corruption, but relief; not for idle and degrading indulgence, but for wholesome retreat from the turmoils of life. The libertine and the sensualist, who desecrate it to the gratification of their passions, counteract, as far as they can, the whole design of the institution; and that day visits them but for profanation and crime, which is to become to every good man a period of holy quiet, of salutary retirement, and of profitable recollection.

By the practice and precept of the Apostles and their successors, the Lord's day was to be also set apart for the public assemblies of the faithful. The congregation of Christians were then to be called together to offer up their praises and thanksgivings to their common Father, in the name and through the merits of their common Redeemer. A kindred spirit of devotion was to assemble, in associated worship, the humble disciples of the gospel of peace; and on the same day, and, perhaps, on the same hour, the united voice of the followers of Christ was every where to acknowledge the mercies, or to sup-

plicate the protection, of the Father, the Sanctifier, and the Saviour of the world. Then, too, the benevolence of evangelical charity was to be exercised, and provision made for the relief of the poor. The Jew had regarded the healing of the sick on the sabbath day as a crime. But under the new dispensation, no observance, however explicitly and strictly enjoined, was in any wise to supersede the higher claims of social and moral obligation. In conformity with this principle was the injunction of the Apostle, " Let every man, on the first day of the week, lay by " for him in store according as God has prospered " him." Worship was, therefore, accompanied by charity. The prayer and the alms went up together as memorials before God ; and the humble homage of adoration was blended with, and rendered more precious by, the acceptable incense of deeds of mercy *.

The same wisdom which directed the Sabbath day to be thus consecrated to God and to the poor, required that a portion of it should be also devoted to the instruction of the ignorant, and the diffusion of evangelical truth. The people, humbled and purified by the exercise of devotion, or raised above the vanities of the world by high and holy contemplations, were better prepared for the reception of sound doctrine and useful precept. Then it was that they were to hear the voice of the Pastor, and to receive the illumination of wisdom. The writings of Prophets and of Apostles were read to them. The

* Pliny, lib. 10. Epist. 97. Orig. lib. iii. contra Cels. Justin Mart. Apol. ii. First Ep. Corinth. xvi. 2. Justin Martyr says, that those who were mercifully disposed gave such alms as their circumstances permitted; and what was then collected, was deposited in the hands of the president, and distributed to the orphans and widows, as occasion required. Apolog. ii. p. 96, 99.

words of sanctifying truth descended upon their hearts. Doubt was satisfied, hesitation confirmed, infidelity enlightened and convinced, belief itself instructed, elevated, inspired; and this practice of periodical exhortation, adopted in reverence of apostolic example, or in obedience to apostolic precept, was to distinguish the return of the Lord's day, and to minister, through all future times, to the edification of the congregated people, and the justification and diffusion of the gospel*.

Of an institution consecrated to such purposes, the importance has been admitted by the whole civilized world. It has descended from age to age, and spread from realm to realm; it continues periodically to collect the population of different nations in the temples of the Almighty; it is revered and observed wherever the light of the gospel has been diffused; and kings, and legislators, and conquerors, and people, have alike embraced a solemnity, so affecting in the objects to which it refers, and so salutary in the offices which it claims and promotes.

In the general temper of mankind we discover a strong and debasing gravitation to the vanities of the world; and the multitude of secular engagements

* "Paul, when the disciples came together on the first day of the week, to break bread, preached unto them;" and we have instances, in the Acts of the Apostles, of the mode and topics of his preaching. Justin Martyr states, what other Christian fathers confirm, the nature of the public instruction of the people on the sabbath. "The Christians having assembled on the day of our Lord's resurrection, we read the writings of the Prophets and Apostles, and the president then addresses them, and exhorts them to believe and to practise what they have heard. Then all join in celebrating the sacrament." Justin Mart. Apol. ii. 96, 99. Ignat. Epist. ad Magar. § 9. Clemens Alexandrin. Strom. vii. p. 744. Orig. Contr. Cels. lib. viii. p. 392.

and avocations by which so many are occupied, contribute perpetually to weaken in the mind all the sober and solemn impressions of religion. The sabbath counteracts this low attachment to things of the earth, by associating men in the performance of the most indispensable of all duties, and in the contemplation of the most sublime and interesting of all objects. Without such an institution, how are the ignorant to be reminded of the duties which they owe to themselves and to God? By what means shall the mass of mankind, so incessantly engaged in the toils of life, be impressed with spiritual ideas sufficiently forcible to check the general current of their thoughts and their propensities? From whence shall the uneducated poor hear of God, of judgment, of redemption, of immortality, of heaven, of hell? What shall kindle those aspiring hopes by which virtue is nourished and elevated, or excite those salutary fears by which vice is intimidated or restrained? How shall the children of this world be reminded with effect of the high vocation to which they are born, and of the moral and religious responsibility to which they are subject? Or by what means would be prevented the rapid progress of that ignorance and degeneracy, which render men unfit for social intercourse, and prepare the way for every crime by which social intercourse is disgraced, degraded, or dissolved.

Even to the manners and decencies of life, the Sabbath extends its benignant influence. By associating the people of the same neighbourhood in the most sacred of all offices, and by suspending the cares and labours which so often harden as well as corrupt the heart, it tends to humanize the passions and to strengthen the bonds of social connexion,

and friendly intercourse. On other occasions, the poor are to consider themselves as the children of necessity and of toil, and can scarcely look forward into the world, without painfully contrasting the abundance enjoyed by others, with the sadness and misery of their own dependence. But, in the house of God, and in the occupations of the Lord's day, they are taught to entertain sentiments of a different nature. They learn how little are the petty and momentary distinctions of rank and power, compared with the high and eternal privileges of religion. Joining with their superiors in one common worship, recognising one common Lord, and heirs, as they are taught, of one common hope, they may justly regard the most elevated of those around them as beings of the same family and accountability with themselves; and, while, in this manner, the idea of kindred and connexion is awakened and vindicated, the pride of the great is checked, the spirit of the poor is cheered; subordination, introduced by the diversity of ranks, becomes less likely to impair the moral and social intercourse of man with man; and the high and the low, instead of beholding in each other but lords to rule, and vassals to obey, are led to consider themselves as brethren, bound to reciprocal humanity by equal obligation, and under equal responsibility.

Look to the assembled village on the Sabbath day. The toil which had laboured through the week has ceased. Decency, order, and cheerfulness, succeed to the cares, the degradations, and the anxieties of earthly pursuits. The friendly affections of the heart, which the occupations of the world had contributed to suspend, are awakened and indulged. The tranquillity and innocence of religious repose rest upon

the community. The sordid bustle and low passions of the sons of the earth are still. The offices and duties to which men are called, elevate the humble; and humiliate the proud. And, while the different classes of life are brought together to listen without distinction to the same words of instruction, and to bow down with the same reverence before the same altar, all are softened and improved, and a generous conviction of brotherhood and equality is impressed upon the mind. Of an institution which thus contributes to the happiness and union of men, we shall not merely say that it is affecting and beautiful. It is more. The peace and happiness of social life are; in a high degree, indebted to it for their improvement or preservation; and the civilization of the Christian world, and the wide diffusion of the blessings and virtues which accompany it, may testify the holy and happy influence of the Christian Sabbath.

IV. The religion from whence so many noble and profitable ordinances were derived, was to require the service of a consecrated ministry for the performance of the solemnities which it enjoined, and the diffusion of the doctrines which it announced: Christ, therefore, who had his commission as a high priest from the Father,* invested the apostles, after his resurrection, with a similar commission, and sent them forth into the world to fulfil the duties of their sublime office†. Under this authority, they presided

* "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you; and he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." John xx. 21, 22.

† This office was not personal to the Apostles. It is evident, that when Christ promised to be with them in the execution of their commission, "even unto the end of the world," he included their successors. Matt. xxviii. 20.

over the Christian church, became "as ambassadors of Christ, to beseech men to be reconciled to God;" appointed assistants in proportion as the increasing harvests required additional labourers; and ordained "elders in every city, who might set all things in order, and rebuke," or regulate, the subordinate members of the ministry. In this manner, an apostolical priesthood arose, with various and useful powers; and the wisdom and the utility of the institution was soon demonstrated by the rapid progress and effective establishment of the Gospel.

This priesthood was of three orders. The bishop was the head, possessed of authority to ordain, invested with the regulation and government of the churches, and appointed to administer the sacraments, and preach to the people.* The Presbyters, who held the second rank, were to co-operate with the bishop in the fulfilment of these latter duties; and the inferior deacon was, occasionally, to preach and pray,† but, principally, to attend to the necessities of the poor, to make provision for the public festivals, to keep the treasury of the church under the episcopal authority, and to distribute to the necessitous, as circumstances might permit or require.

* The words Bishop and Elder have been considered as synonymous, but they were used distinctively. Timothy, the first bishop of Ephesus, was charged to "rebuke the presbyters that sin before all, that others also may fear." The bishops, therefore, had jurisdiction over their presbyters; and the latter, of course, must have been of an inferior order. Even St. Jerome, the opponent of episcopacy, has admitted a striking distinction between the bishop and presbyter—"Quid enim fecit, excepta ordinatione, episcopus, quod presbyter non faciat." *Epist. ad Evag.*

† The deacon had authority to preach and baptize, as appears from the example of Philip.

Under this institution, provision was made for the regular and exact performance of pastoral duty. The people were instructed in the truth of the Gospel, and encouraged and required, in all cases of doubt and difficulty, to consult the piety and wisdom of their ministers. The ignorant were no longer to wander without guidance and edification; the guilty were to experience the interposition of anxious and paternal reproof; the persecuted were to be fortified by holy and inspiring hopes; and the poor to be sustained by the hand of charity. In all its concerns, the maintenance and diffusion of the Gospel, the confirmation of wavering and unenlightened faith, the admission and instruction of the proselyte, and the protection of the fold of God from the inroads of the infidel, the church was to be served and advanced by the tempered zeal and holy vigilance of pastors, whose patience, whose knowledge, and whose virtues, justified their vocation. From them, as from a pure and abundant source, the stream of sacred truth, like the precious ointment that descended from the beard of Aaron, even unto the skirts of his clothing, was to reach and to refresh the last and lowest ranks of the faithful; and, to them, under the providence of God, was the religion of Christ to be indebted for its prosperity and its triumphs, in opposition to the powers of darkness and of the world.

To discover more clearly the nature, the object, and the utility of this ministry, we contemplate it in action. We behold a Peter and a Paul, going forth, in their single strength, to reclaim the idolatry, repress the crimes, and enlighten the ignorance of men. They were silenced by no menace, and intimidated by no hostility. In the sanhedrim of the

Jew, as in the temple of the Gentile, they were equally prepared to sustain the honour of their religion, not, indeed, with the arms of bigotry and violence, but of sound and sober wisdom. They were earnest to confute, but it was by truth ; to proselyte, but it was by conviction. With an eloquence which was to afford a sublime example to the preacher of all succeeding times, they directed the attention of their hearers, not to fanciful theories, the feeble web of speculative brains ; nor to metaphysical reveries, equally incomprehensible to the ignorant and the learned ; but to righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come—to the character, the mission, and the miracles of their Master—to the inestimable mercies of redemption and of grace—and to those hopes of immortal life which the Gospel of Christ inspires, justifies, and confirms.* In this work of edification, they gave proof of a patience and perseverance, which no toils could abate, and of an energy and zeal, which no danger could extinguish. Yet, if they were firm and earnest in the maintenance of truth, they were prudent and sober in the manner in which they maintained it. The wisdom of the serpent was in them tempered with the simplicity of the dove ; and, however the powerful and flagitious might have trembled as they spoke,† the spirit of

* See Acts ii. Acts xiii. Acts xvii. Acts xx.

† Felix trembled. Acts xxiv. 25. The eloquence of Cicero, in his appeal to the mercy of Cæsar, has been universally extolled. But what was the eloquence which succeeded by artful and elegant adulation, compared with that by which a despised and calumniated religion was vindicated, in the presence of its most powerful and malignant opponents, and by which the tyrant, in the very midst of his guards, and on the seat of his authority, was “almost” converted into a Christian, and taught to tremble for his crimes!

charity dwelt upon their lips, and the simple ones of the earth heard them, and were edified.

Some of the sermons yet remain, in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the apostolical epistles, which, addressed in this spirit to the people, bear witness to the temper and the toils of the primitive ministry of the church. In them, error is corrected, truth justified, righteousness proclaimed, with a simplicity without guile, an authority without presumption, an earnestness without intolerance, a dignity without pride, a zeal without fanaticism. "I beseech you," such is the language addressed in one of them to an infant church, "I beseech you, walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, not alienated like the Gentiles from the life of God, speaking every one truth with his neighbour. Be ye angry, and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour with his own hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind one to another, and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."* Such was the manner in

"Per omnem sævitiam," says the historian, speaking of Felix, "jus regium servile ingenio exercuit Felix." Hist. lib. v. Annal. xii. And this was the man whose pride was to be prostrated and appalled by the reasoning of a poor and persecuted apostle!

* Ephes. iv.

the ministers of the Gospel exhorted and edified the people. Such was the tempered fervour which, not merely the Apostle of the Gentiles, but all the apostles of whom we have any account, strove to have corrected the errors of men, and to have conducted the yet unsteady proselyte in the way of truth. The consequences are known; and the example testifies the spirit which should at all times actuate and govern the Christian ministry.

The excellence and utility of the priesthood thus manifested in the primitive church, Julian, the philosopher and the fanatic, the persecutor and the sage, the sturdy and squalid * assertor of the declining glories of the pantheon of the Greek, has borne a strong but reluctant testimony. While he contemplated the falling images, the deserted shrines, the forsaken temples of his gods, he attributed their lamency to the ignorance and vices of his pagans, and hastened, with a zeal worthy of a better cause, to reform and purify the corruption of the times.

But it was by the model of the Christian ministry, and, if possible, by the infusion of Christian spirit, that he was to renovate the service of his pagan altars; and, in his admonitory letter to the priest of Galatia, he describes the charity, the simplicity, the unbought toil, the self-denying abstinence, the zeal, the wisdom, the regularity, of the ministers of Christ, as affording at once an example and a reproach to the cold or dissolute servants of the immortal gods †."

must refer to Gibbon, in his eloquent history of Julian, for the glowing honours of the Apostate's beard, and the decent cleanliness of his dress. In his admiration of the doctrines of Plato, he speaks of the elegance of the philosopher.

Julian. Fragment. Epist. p. 452, 453, 551, 553, &c. See also Symeon. lib. v. c. 16. Gregor. Nazianz. Invec. In Jul.

If we, now, summarily advert to the institutions of the Gospel, which have been surveyed in the preceding pages, we shall be ready, perhaps, to admit, that, in their origin, their design, and their tendency, they transcend, beyond all comparison, the best and most interesting of those ordinances which human reason, in its highest state of improvement, and under the most favourable circumstances, has been able to interweave in the religions of the world. We do not here contemplate the Bacchanalian revelry, the meretricious dance, the wanton service, or the sanguinary rite ; nor are we offended by the positive injunction which neglects utility for forms, nor the holy ceremonies which, while they exercise and inflame a fanatical faith, diminish the influence of social virtue. Institutions only are before us which at once elevate the spirit of devotion, and operate with salutary effect on the conduct of life ; or which, as the Christian ministry, are designed to provide for the necessities of the orphan and the widow, and to conduct the wandering flock to the folds of heaven. For the orgies of riot, the desolating pilgrimages, the sacrifices of the car, and the flames of the pile, are substituted ordinances peaceful, simple, innocent, and useful, and sanctified to the most sublime and holy purposes. That which had become necessary, has been conferred ; which had been burdensome or cruel, has been done away ; which had ministered to the ignorance and depravity of man, has been removed ; which human capacity had hitherto been unable to discover for the improvement of the human condition, has been amply and effectually supplied.—Here, then, we possess another evidence of the peculiar excellence of the Gospel of Christ.

CHAPTER VII.

MORALS AND MOTIVES.

SECT. I.

Ambiguous support to virtue of the religion of Greece and Italy—The example of the gods worshipped, and the worship required, injurious to morals—Rites and profligacy—Privileged vices of the Greeks and Romans—General exemplification—Opinion of Hume—Morality of the schools—Beautiful and excellent precepts—Not diffused—The philosophers instructors only of their own sects—Disputatious, contradictory and corrupt—Frequently false in motive and principle—Instances—Soft and voluptuous doctrines of Epicurus—Rigid, overstrained, and inconsistent doctrines of Zeno—The Academy—Moral and metaphysical hesitation and doubt—Virtue uncertain—The commonwealth of Plato—A splendid system—Fragile in the superstructure, imperfect though magnificent in the plan—The Platonic disciple instructed to trust in omens, oracles, and divinations—Scepticism united with superstition, a facile faith with a hardy incredulity—Striking and offensive errors of academic morality—General character of the moral science of Greece and Italy.

HOWEVER defective and corrupt the religion of Greece and Italy may have hitherto appeared, in all those doctrines from which precept and motive may be deduced, it must not be denied that a moral influence may have been sometimes exercised, and a moral purpose sometimes fulfilled, by that fanciful and extravagant system. It was deeply and indelibly impressed with the great outlines of practical truth; and it enforced, with occasional beauty of language, those obvious duties of

life by which society is to be regulated, and which every religious code in the world has, in a certain degree, proclaimed and sanctioned.

But, like every other code of human origin, the religion of the Greek is liable to great objections as a rule of life. The doctrines of superstition which it announced are numerous and authoritative, the precepts of conduct are rare. It called on men for worship, but did not address them for edification; and observances and forms, the progeny of holy ignorance or craft, were to occupy the reverence which are due only to the piety which elevates, and the virtues which dignify, mankind.

The poets by whom this religion was so beautifully unfolded and so richly adorned, seem to have framed their work with little regard to moral consistency. The charm of verse, which they so eminently possessed, was employed to attract the multitude round the altars of the gods; but they disclosed such details of the gods themselves as could not but have contributed to impair the influence of practical wisdom, and to confound the distinctions of vice and virtue.

The system, indeed, which affords this ambiguous support to practical truth, would be less safely described as a code of sound morals and rational piety, than as a confused institution of truth and falsehood, of folly and fable, which, pretending to promote holiness and virtue among men, breathed and diffused, more frequently, licentiousness and pleasure. Being wholly traditional, it afforded full scope to corruption and fraud; and, while it was to admit and embrace among its gods every monster of imposture and superstition, it was to reject reform, not merely as unnecessary, but as impious, and to become

“ complex, contradictory, and doubtful, without any
 “ determinate articles of faith, or any fixed and
 “ decided dogmas of religion ”†.

Even at their very altars, the Greek and Roman might learn the lessons of immorality. If the gods who were adored, taught and authorized vice by celestial example, the same vice would be naturally thought permissible in man. The errors of inferior beings were easily to deduce their apology, or their vindication, from the corrupt wanderings of superior natures; and heaven itself was to afford, by the crimes with which it was tainted, a ready and infallible sanction to the weaknesses and the guilt of human infirmity†.

The gods of this religion did not merely teach crime by example, but produce it by their influence. They perpetually interfered to kindle the evil passions, and prompt the evil designs of men. The imperial Juno might find it necessary to the accomplishment of her purposes, to madden or corrupt her

* All Polytheism, says Hume, was liable to this *inconvenience*. But who but a professed panegyrist of polytheism would soften into an *inconvenience*, effects so mischievous, both in a moral and religious view? Nat. Hist. Relig. Sect. ix. xii.

† Enquire of the wisdom of the ancients, says the Confidant of the Drama, and you will learn that Jupiter burned for Semele, and that Aurora did not disdain the charms of the mortal Cephalus. Wilt thou, then, unhappy Phædra, refuse to yield to thy fate, and art thou greater than the gods, that thou darest to resist the laws by which they are governed! Hypolit. Act ii. sc. 2. What! said the Eumenides, shall Jupiter, who threw his father into chains, condemn a queen for giving her husband the stroke of death! Æschyl. Eumen. Act v. The argument was common, and was natural. The young man, in the comedy of Terence, vindicates his crime in the same manner. Eunuch. Act iii. And several of the characters in the tragedies of Euripides employ the same plea of justification.

mortal victim; and the "mother of the loves" might infuse her own passions into the lover, and rejoice in the effects of the wantonness and disorder which she had provoked. But that which the gods suggested and willed, they could not condemn. Whatever was the culpability, it was to be ascribed only to the impulse and inspiration which produced it; and the criminal might feel himself sufficiently absolved, while he was thus permitted to transfer his guilt and his responsibility to the inhabitants of heaven*.

The very rites of the religion which afforded such feeble support to the cause of virtue, were to promote the progress of public and private corruption. They occupied, in their observance, all classes of the community; the girl, the matron, the boy, and the man. Every grosser and viler passion was called forth to unrestricted indulgence during their continuance; and who could join the rout of Bacchus, engage in the processions of the Bona Dea, or mingle in the mysteries of Corinthian impurity, without bringing back to society a heart corrupted by the grossness and obscenity of the scene in which he had been engaged?

Of this religion, then, it will scarcely be affirmed

* When Alexander, after the death of Clito, lamented his crime, the Sophist consoled him by the assurance that he was impelled by a superior power. Plut. In Alexandr. Phædra, in her calamity, ascribes her guilt to the wrath of Venus, kindled by the chastity of the unhappy Hypolitus. Eurip. Hypol. Hercules, after he had murdered his wife and children, attributes the deed to the malignity of Juno, and derives his consolation from his impiety. See Eurip. Hercules Furens. Ovid. Epist. Phædr. ad Hypol. and Gibbon, Miscell. Works. Essai sur de Literat. lxxv.

that it diffused the knowledge, or heightened the reverence, of virtue. The obligations of duty were weakly and coldly impressed; the vices of men were justified by the vices of the gods; the sanctions of motive were often corrupt, and always inadequate; and the precept was as rare and as ineffectual which was to enlighten individual or public ignorance, as the restraint, which was to repress public or individual depravity, was feeble and frail.*

Under such a system, morals and manners became equally impure. Patriotism was stimulated and recompensed by praise, and the wisdom and vigour of the magistrate were visible in the order and prosperity of the state. But there was little delicacy of principle and of conduct, or rather little that was not degenerate and gross; and, when we behold a people, so much extolled for their learning and politeness, permitting the walls of their chambers to be polluted by images of obscene indulgence; sending forth their wives and children to intermingle in the riots of naked and lascivious fanatics; erecting temples to the most wanton of gods, and for appropriate worship†; delighting to exhibit the grossest

* Herodot. lib. v. c. 4, 5. Minut. Felix, cap. xxv. Lactant. lib. i. c. 25. Strabo, Geograph. lib. viii. p. 387. Quint. Curt. lib. v. c. 1. —Gibbon, *Etude de la Literat.* lxxvi. may be consulted by the reader who is better pleased than I am with the superstition of the Greeks.

† It is remarkable that all the more elegant festivals of Paganism were outlived by its most vile and barbarous ceremonies. The temples of Venus remained open to the most impure of her worshippers, the mysteries of Bacchus continued to be celebrated with all the licence of ancient times, and the hideous sacrifices of the taurobolia and criobolia, the aspersion of the blood of the bull and of the ram, were celebrated with undiminished fervor. Fontenelle, *Hist. des Oracl.* ch. iv. Shall we wonder at the progressive pro-

and most licentious figures on the vases with which their apartments were adorned; encouraging the performers of their plays to display openly on the stage the most disgusting emblems; and permitting their priests to bear aloft the same emblems as the indispensable ornaments of their devout celebrities; when we behold the Greeks and the Romans thus steeped in private debauchery and public profligacy, and thus tolerating or encouraging all that is shameful and impudent in public and private excess, we shall no longer be inclined to affirm the moral efficacy of their religious institutions, and no longer, perhaps, hesitate to confess, that the superstition which they embraced was favourable, in no slight degree, to the encouragement and the indulgence of the most impure and the most licentious of their passions*.

The defects of the whole religion have been dis-

fligacy of Rome, recorded by so many writers; or be in the slightest degree astonished that, under such a system, women of high name and station should be found to appear frequently and fearlessly before the *Ædiles*, and enrol themselves in the lists of licensed prostitution? Suet. lib. iii. c. 35. Tacit. *Annal.* lib. ii. c. 85. Juvenal pictures the depravity of his times with all the fervour of the poet and all the indignation of the moralist. *Satyr.* vi. *passim*.

* Some of the paintings on the walls of the chambers at *Herculaneum*, exhibited, with prurient accuracy, the revels of the most unchaste of the Greek and Roman divinities; and the grossness of the emblems displayed by the priests is alluded to by almost every classical author of antiquity. But I would particularly refer to a vase in *Winkelman*, and a passage in *Aristophanes*, as affording an abundant proof of the theatrical exhibitions of impure and offensive emblems. *Winkelman. Hist. de l'Art de l'Antiquité.* Tom. i. p. 182. 204. *Aristoph. Nub.* v. 539. The priests of the East indulged in the public display of the same objects. *Plut. de Is. et Osir.* *Herod. lib.* v. 48.

closed, with yet greater freedom, by a philosopher not remarkably fastidious in his estimate of Paganism. According to his statement, a man of the highest character, at Athens or at Rome, might be guilty of incest, of parricide, of assassination, of perjury, of treason, and of other crimes too abominable to be named, without "diminishing in the least from the brightness of his good name." His death too might, unblamed, be suitable to such a life. "He might conclude the scene by a desperate act of self-murder, and die with the most absurd blasphemies in his mouth; and, notwithstanding all this, he shall have statues erected to his memory, poems and orations shall be composed in his praise, great sects shall be proud of calling themselves by his name, and the most distant posterity shall blindly continue their admiration, though, were such a one to rise among themselves, they would justly regard him with horror and execration*." The detail is sufficiently striking. If exaggerated in any of its parts, it is just in substance; and that which, otherwise, might be regarded as an incredible fiction, the author has abundantly confirmed by the evidences of history.

It may be here affirmed, and I am not disposed to deny, that, in the schools at least of Greece and Rome, the voice of a just piety and a sound morality was sometimes heard. The philosopher did not, indeed, direct his inquiries, until late, to the science of morals.

* Hume's Essays. A Dialogue. I admit that he almost parallels his character with that of a modern Parisian. But let me again press the distinction to which I have already adverted. The vices of the first are consistent with the religion which he professed, and tolerated by it. The vices of the last are in utter contradiction to the precepts and spirit of Christianity.

But, when it became fashionable, in consequence of the example of Socrates *, to discuss the distinctions of vice and virtue, precepts of practical wisdom were enforced and taught, which were worthy of the character of the classic nations of antiquity, and might be almost thought to breathe a Christian spirit. Enmity should be mortal, friendship eternal; let placability and mercy be assigned a place among the noblest virtues; the injury succeeded by repentance should be absolved by pardon; knowledge without action is a superstructure without a base, a beginning without an end; the most exalted of sciences are not to be compared, in value or utility, with a single duty which binds us more closely to our parents, to society, and to our country †. Maxims such as these were frequently and emphatically announced, and the pages which they illuminate might furnish a code, not wholly adequate, perhaps, to the moral necessities of man, yet well calculated to extend the influence of virtue, and to diffuse the lessons of practical truth.

But, however excellent the precepts of philosophy might have been, they were little serviceable to the mass of mankind. They were scattered through many volumes; discussed rather for the proud display of metaphysical subtilty, or the scholastic exercise of philosophical leisure, than the laudable purpose of popular edification; and they were addressed, with elaborate erudition, to the few who were accounted

* Socrates primus Philosophiam devocavit e cœlo, et in urbibus collocavit; et coegit de vita et moribus quærere. Cic. Tusculanarum Disputat. lib. v. 4.

† Cic. de Officiis lib. i. c. 6. lib. c. 43, 44. Marc. Aurel. lib. ix. c. 47. Id. lib. v. c. 51.

worthy to receive them, but neither explained with sufficient perspicuity, nor stated with sufficient simplicity, for the comprehension of the multitude*. The poor and ignorant, therefore, could not collect them if they could comprehend, nor comprehend them if they could collect; and, even if collected and comprehended, they would have been defective in influence, because enforced by no recognised authority in the teachers who had uttered them.

The teachers themselves diminished the efficacy of their tenets, by their cavils and contradictions. If they had been the uniform and consistent advocates of virtue, their combined authority might have afforded a very just and a very powerful sanction to their doctrines. But when those instructors of men were often to combat with each other, and as often to be at variance with themselves; when they involved their pupils, at one moment, in the mazes of metaphysics, or entangled them, at another, in the subtle perplexities of categories and syllogisms†; when they promulgated two hundred and eighty different opinions on the subject of the chief good;

* Est, inquit Cicero, philosophia paucis contenta judiciis, multitudinem consulto ipsa fugiens—maximum itaque argumentum est et philosophiam neque ad sapientiam tendere, neque ipsum esse sapientiam, quod mysterium ejus barba celebratur et pallio. Lactant. lib. iii.

† The doctrines of two of the mighty masters of syllogism continued to govern and mislead the world for more than two thousand years after their authors had perished. Schools and colleges, and all Europe, were under the dominion of the spell; and the human understanding, at once limited and subdued, was to know no glory but that of implicit and slavish submission to the doctrines of a dark, confused, and often unintelligible philosophy. Fortunately the star of reformation, and of Bacon, at length arose, and Aristotle and Plato were renounced for truth and freedom.

when the Stoic denounced all sins as equally criminal, and announced insensibility to pain as a test of virtue*; the Epicurean advocated pleasure as the first object of reasonable beings, yet maintained that the wise man might be happy in the agony of torture; and the Academician, secretly despising both, discountenanced and rejected their inferences, without affirming any opinion of his own†; when so many of these ancient masters, after having maintained, with zealous pertinacity, the most discordant, and, often, the most whimsical theories on the subject of moral obligation, were compelled, after all, to acknowledge that the senses were fallacious, reason was infirm, truth inscrutable, prejudice and custom every where predominant, and all things involved in eternal and impenetrable gloom‡; it was not to be expected that their doctrines would be heard with much deference, or much submission, and we can no longer wonder at the express acknowledgment of some among them, that none but a divine instructor could reform the ignorance of the world, and that “there was yet wanting some method of delivering

* *Sapientem gratiâ nunquam moveri, nunquam cujusquam delicto ignoscere, viri non esse neque exorari, neque placari, omnia peccata esse paria—nec minus delinquere eum qui gallum gallinaceum, cum opus non sit, quam eum qui patrem suffocaverit—sapientem nihil opinari, nullius rei penitere, nulla in re falli, sententiam mutari nunquam.* Cicer. *pro Muræ.* The character of the Stoic is here strongly, but not unjustly described.

† Cicer. *Tusc. Quæst.* v. 4. *De Fin. lib. ii.* 1. *De Orat. iii.* 18.

‡ Qui (omnes pene veteres) nihil cognosci, nihil percipi, nihil scire posse dixerunt, angustos sensus, imbecillos animos, in profundo veritatem dimersam, opinionibus et institutis omnia tenere, nihil veritate relinquere; deinceps omnia in tenebris circumfusa esse dixerunt. Cicer. *Academ. Quæst.* i. 13.

“ men’s souls, which no sect of philosophy had ever,
 “ yet found out*.”

The contradictions which were permitted to disgrace the writings of almost every philosopher of every school, were not merely of a theoretical character, marked by the most absurd, and wanton in extravagance. They extended to life and manners, to principles and motives, to all the individual and social interests of men. The sage who would have proscribed commerce and poetry as dangerous to the morals of a people, saw no criminality in the exposure of infants†, and in the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes‡. They who maintained that truth was founded in the eternal right and fitness of things, and that the laws of virtue were immutable and immortal, were to admit an authority superior to both, and to degrade morality into the creature of accident, versatile as time and chance, and governed by them||. And others, who occasionally and wisely announced the precepts of hu-

* The sagacity of Bacon has adverted, with force and truth, to the great defects of the schools and sects of ancient philosophy. — Et de utilitate aperte dicendum est; sapientiam istam, quam a Græcis potissimum hausimus, pueritiam quandam scientiæ videri, atque habere quod proprium est puerorum, ut ad generandum invalida et immatura, sit. Controversiarum enim ferax, operum effeta est. De Augment. Scient. Præf.

† Appendix, Note Z. Z.

‡ Plato de Leg. lib. iv. The polite and accomplished philosopher maintained these opinions without a blush, and without a rebuke.

|| Cicero, after having asserted that truth and law were coeval with the divine mind, coolly and calmly admits that, “ multa quæ honesta naturâ videntur esse, temporibus fiunt non honesta.” Cicer. de Legib. 2, 4, 5. De Offic. iii. c. 25. The latitude of interpretation is here sufficiently ample.

manity and of mercy, were yet to concede the right of slaughtering the brave but unhappy gladiator for public diversion; to limit the intercourse of nation with nation, by the unnatural distinction of mankind into masters and slaves; and to flatter Greece into the opinion, that, while she alone was entitled to empire by the glory and pre-eminence of her attainments, subjection and labour were the just portion of the stupid and worthless barbarians who occupied the rest of the world*.

I. In adverting more minutely to the moral philosophy of Greece and Italy, we may commence our review with the school of Epicurus. From the superintendence of the gods over the affairs of men, and from the hopes and fears of future recompence and retribution, the Epicurean disdained to derive either principle or motive. Pleasure was his chief or only good; and pain his sole, or his greatest evil†. Though the wisdom of philosophy was to supply him with more than stoical fortitude; and no suffering, however protracted or acute, was to diminish his felicity‡; he was to govern himself by

* Aristotle delivers a doctrine so pregnant with evil, and so well calculated to convert the spirit of patriotism into a ferocious principle of external and unlimited subjugation, as a moral and political axiom which required no proof. Aristot. de Repub. c. 5, 6. Politic. lib. iii. c. 3, 7. The pride of Rome adopted all the insolence of the precept.

† *Lætantem enim mentem ita novi, spe eorum omnium quæ supra dixi (nempe voluptates sensuum), fore ut natura iis potiens dolore careat.* Tuscul. Disput. lib. ii. § 18. *Nec intelligere quidem, quod sit ullum bonum, præter id quod sensibus corporeis, cibo, potioneque, et obscæna voluptate percipitur.* Cic. de Fin. lib. ii. c. 3.

‡ Diog. Laert. lib. x. segm. 118. Tuscul. Disputat. lib. ii. c. 7. lib. v. c. 20. Lactant. Div. Instit. lib. iii. c. 27.

the most soft and selfish of all maxims, and to live and act for sensual indulgence. It was not for him to suffer for the welfare of his country, and to submit, for the good of his family, to toil and trouble*. Friendship, gratitude, and humanity, had no legitimate claim upon his observance, but in proportion as they became accessory to his profit or his pleasure†. Honesty, virtue, baseness, and crime, were things existing only by human convention, and were to be observed, or shunned, with reference only to the attainment of his ultimate object‡. If he was to be just, it was because justice might promote his views of enjoyment; if he was not to be unjust, it was because injustice might be followed by detection and punishment, and, therefore, might impede or impair his pleasures§. The pernicious and extravagant system which he thus avowed, a system in which self was every thing, and truth and virtue were nothing §, was embraced by a numerous and ap-

* Diog. Laert. lib. v. segm. 77.

† They were of no intrinsic worth, and to be considered only as instruments of prudence. Cicer. de Fin. lib. i. Diog. Laert. lib. x. segm. 18.

‡ Appendix, Note A. A. A.

§ The Epicurean of modern times has adopted this philosophy of the senses; and Voltaire, or whoever was the author of "Les Six Discours sur l'homme," may be classed with the ancient teacher of sensuality.

La Nature attentive a remplir nos desirs,

Nous rapelle aux Dieux par la voix des Plaisirs.

Helvetius, and his sect, while they despised the sober simplicity of revelation, have had the hardihood to profess the same principle. De l'Esprit. tom. i. Disc. ii. c. 15. And the Lettres Critiques of the Abbe Gauchet.

§ Many of the ancient philosophers avowed the same opinions; and Theodorus, Archelaus, Aristippus, Pyrrho, and all the sceptics,

plauded sect, and maintained with resolute and ardent pertinacity. Its author, as singular in the real or pretended magnanimity of his last hours*, as he was adventurous in the theory on which he founded his school, was extolled and honoured in his lifetime, followed by his pupils with reverence to his grave, and consigned to the glory of posthumous celebrity. He was proclaimed a god, because he had delivered men from the fear of the gods. His image was displayed on the cups and rings of his disciples, and exhibited in their chambers, and produced on their visits; and not only was his birthday distinguished by the solemnity of sacrifice, but a monthly feast was established in commemoration of his wisdom, and a statue of brass erected to perpetuate his name†. As other sects declined, his flourished. All Italy and Greece may be said to have embraced his school. The creed which he announced, continued to be taught, under the Emperors, by sophists, whose eloquence and whose erudition received, and were thought to merit, the recompence of ample stipends, and of public applause; and we may form some opinion of the state of individual and social morals, at the period when doctrines of such a character, instead of being rejected with detestation or contempt, were maintained with so much earnestness, and adopted with so much zeal.

participated, in this respect, the honours of Epicurus. Epictet. *Dissertat. lib. ii. c. 20.* Plato de *Legib. lib. x.*

* "I am dying," said he to his friends, "in the torture of a most afflicting disease. Yet this, the last, is also the happiest day of my life; and, whatever be my suffering, it is amply compensated by the recollection of the intellectual discoveries which have occupied so many years of my life." Cicero. de *Fin. lib. ii. c. 30.*

† Cicero de *Fin. lib. v. 1.* Plin. *Hist. Nat. lib. xxxv. c. 2.*

II. The Stoic, who would have disdained a comparison with Epicurus, has been at least as inconsistent and extravagant in his doctrines, as that intrepid philosopher. He was, indeed, the most manly, stubborn, and uncompromising of all the moralists of antiquity. However imperfectly he may have explained the doctrine of obligation, he dilated with zeal and energy on the precepts of practical wisdom. Much of what he announced was wise and good. He taught by precept, and sometimes by example, the high virtues of patience and fortitude; that patience which calmly endures, and that fortitude which braves, or subdues, the evils of life. Justice, sobriety, temperance; and self-possession, were considered by him not as virtues of compact, but as essential in their nature, and indispensable in their obligation; and the volumes in which his school have treasured and perpetuated his doctrines, might afford precepts for the regulation of life and of the heart, not unworthy of the best and brightest system of moral truth. Yet this excellence of doctrine was frequently impaired by gross error, and unphilosophical hardihood. There was no distinction of crime and punishment; every violation of the law was of equal guilt, and, therefore, was to merit the same punishment. Though the superstition of the sect adopted, with facile faith, the most ludicrous details of gods and goddesses, no sanction of moral precept, and no encouragement to moral conduct, were deduced from the will and approbation of heaven. The sense of right and wrong, in the bosom of the wise man, was to be his rule and recompence.*

* In seipsum habere maximum potestatem, inestimabile bonum est suum fieri. This is added to the important clause—Non homines

There was in the gods neither the inclination nor the power to inflict evil ; and, where there is no evil to be inflicted, there is no fear to be entertained*. The sage, accordingly, looks but to himself ; he becomes his own God. Equal or superior to the deities in virtue, he is equal or superior to them in felicity†. The death of his children, the servitude of his kindred, the oppression of his country, the destruction of his fellow-citizens, afflict not him. Jupiter and he are both wise ; but Jupiter, who is wise only by the benefit and excellence of his nature, is excelled by him who is wise only by his own free and generous election‡.

In this more than co-equality with divine natures, the Stoic enjoys exemptions and privileges to which other men dare not aspire. Pain and sorrow, and the approach of death itself in its worst form, cannot shake the unconquerable fortitude of his spirit||. He breathes and lives in an atmosphere high above the storms which agitate the world ; and he can be diverted by no interposition of human or celestial

timere deos. Seneca. Epist. 75, fere ad fin. See also Antonin. Meditat. lib. vi. sect. v. lib. vii. sect. 70.

* Deus nemo sanus timet ; furor est enim metuere salutaria. Senec. de Benefic. lib. iv. c. 19. Dii immortales nec volunt obesse, nec possunt. Senec. de Ira. lib. ii. c. 27. Nec accipere injuriam queant, nec facere. Epist. 95.

† Sapiens cum Diis ex pari vivit. Deus non vincit sapientem in felicitate. Sen. Epist. 59, 73. Nulla re, nisi in immortalitate, quæ nihil ad beate vivendum pertinet, cedens cælestibus. Cicer. de Nat. Deor. See also Epictet. Dissertat. lib. i. c. 12. s. 2. Sit idem (sapiens) cæcus, debilis, morbo gravissimo adfectus, exaul, orbus, egens ; quem hunc appellat Zeno ? Beatum, etiam beatissimum. Cicer. de Finib. lib. v. c. 28.

‡ Appendix, Note B. B. B.

|| Cicer. de Nat. Deor. lib. ii. § 24. De Fin. lib. v. 21.

power, from his deliberate determination *. From a character so lofty in sentiment, if the sentiment were not false as well as lofty, we might justly expect a correspondent example ; and the proud and marble portico of the temple might be considered as an indication of similar magnificence in the rest of the structure. But he who judges by the promise, will often be disappointed by the performance ; and the performance will be generally feeble, in proportion as the promise has been vain and loud. The invulnerable sage of the stoic †, the human deity who rests upon the sufficiency and independence of his own virtues, and whose happiness even the immortal gods cannot disturb, may, it seems, be subjected to the evils by which ordinary men may be assailed, and experience the privations of poverty, and the pangs of disease. Under such circumstances, is he to put on the panoply of his fortitude, and bravely and calmly to meet the foe ? Is his patience, so vaunted, to be verified by his example, and his stoical virtues to be brightened by the heat of the crucible ? On the contrary, the rules of his own phi-

* * Την προαιρεσιν ἐξ ὧ Ζεὺς νικῆσαι δύναται." See this lofty boast of Epictetus more fully expressed, Dissertat. lib. i. c. 1. sect. 6. God, says that philosopher, elsewhere, has imparted to human nature a portion of his own faculties. He has not even reserved to himself the power of coercion. If he had done so, he would no longer be God. Dissertat. lib. i. c. 6. s. 6. ch. 17. s. 2. The moralist is a little mystical, but the presumption and vanity of the sectarist are sufficiently visible.

† This invulnerable sage may indulge in excess. Laert. lib. vii. segm. 26. Plut. In Vit. Caton. But he does not thereby diminish his invulnerability. " He is superior to error and deceit, not only when awake, but when asleep, or in the spleen, or surfeited by wine." Epictet. Dissertat. lib. ii. c. 17.

lōsophy permit, and encourage him, to make his escape from trials which he may not hope to subdue, or dare to endure. If the evil threaten to disturb the tranquillity of his mind, death is within his reach. If he have reason to suspect a change of fortune, the asylum of the grave is ready to receive him*. He holds in his own hands the panacea of all his evils, and he may legitimately and honourably apply the remedy to the sufferings which he may not be inclined to endure†. So ends the Stoic. Wise, magnanimous, a god. Feeble, impatient, a suicide. Imperturbable, even by the deities he adores. Subdued by the reality or approach of pain, and seeking the refuge of imbecility in the tomb. A sage, superior, except in immortality, to the inhabitants of heaven. A mortal, bending beneath the infirmities of nature, and the calamities of life, and desperately perishing by his own hand.

I do not mean to comment on these collisions of feebleness and presumption, on this boast of words

* Cicero attributes similar language to Cato. *De Fin.* lib. iii. c. 18. Seneca is more explicit. *Si multa occurrunt molesta, et tranquillitatem turbantia, emittit se; nec hoc tantum in necessitate ultima facit, sed cum primum illi cæperit suspecta esse fortuna.* *Epist.* 58, 70.

† The doctrine, in its utmost extent, was openly avowed. It was extolled and diffused by Seneca in almost all his writings. The two Plinys (*Hist. Nat.* lib. xxviii. c. 1. *Epist.* lib. i. c. 22.) embraced it in its full latitude. It is to be found in almost every page of Epictetus. *Dissertat.* lib. i. ch. 9. s. 4.; lib. i. c. 25. sect. 2.; lib. ii. c. i. s. 3.; lib. iii. c. 24. s. 5. &c. And even the sensible and upright Marcus Antoninus, excelled in this instance by the poet,

Rebus in adversis facile est contemnere vitam :

Fortiter ille facit qui miser esse potest—

was faithful to this leading dogma of his school. *Meditat.* lib. iii. sect. 1.; lib. v. sect. 29.; lib. viii. sect. 17.; lib. x. sect. 8.

and failure of practice. It is sufficiently evident that the sense of duty must have been erroneous and weak, where men were instructed to rely, in the foolish vanity of self-confidence and self-dependence, on the fancied sufficiency of their own strength*. It is no less certain, that the ground and obligation of morality must have been little understood, where the scholar was taught to abstract himself from the aid and approbation of heaven, and to repose his trust solely in the ideal infallibility of his individual wisdom. And it will be as readily admitted, that the most indispensable of virtues, those which are every moment rendered necessary by the trials of this world, and without which trial must be accompanied by despair, were ill defined, and feebly impressed, in the school which encouraged its disciples to terminate their evils, anticipated or immediate, by the last act of deliberate suicide.

III. It may be questioned whether we shall find more wisdom in the Academy. That school, distinguished by the fancy, the genius, and the erudition of its master, surpassed all others in the inventive powers which it called forth, and the profound acquirements by which it was enlightened and adorned. Philosophy, at once acute and meditative, borrowed from it a garb of courtly elegance; and it covered the cold severity of Logic itself with garlands of flowers. But moral hesitation and doubt were there, also, to mar the precept which moral taste

* *Turpe est etiamnum deos fatigare. Quid vocis opus est? Fate ipse felicem. Hoc est summum bonum, quod si occupas, incipis deorum esse socius, non supplex. Quam stultum optare, cum possis a te impetrare. Non sunt ad cælum elevandæ manus. Senec. Epist. 31, 41.*

might have enjoined, and genuine wisdom would have confirmed. On common topics, we are told; names are understood. If silver or gold be mentioned, the term leaves no ground for cavil or dispute. But is virtue the subject of discourse, and do we discuss the nature and obligation of her laws, Then, indeed, commences the warfare of discordant opinion. The plainest and most simple precept is surrendered to the hostility of dispute; and doctrines of the most essential and important nature, are enuntiated only to be involved in darkness not to be dispersed, or subjected to cavil, neither to be confuted nor convinced*. In these sentiments Plato educated his sect, and in this spirit of scepticism he uttered his precepts. The light he kindled was but a meteor that shone dimly and doubtfully amid the glooms of academical scepticism. There was no guidance afforded, because the guide was as uncertain of his way, as he whom he was to lead; and the best precept lost its value or its influence, because it was impossible to ascertain whether it might be adopted as true, or should be rejected as false.

Cicero knew, and seems to have approved of, the leading dogma of the Academy. He, like Plato, indulged his fancy in the contemplation of a republic, and exercised his reason in framing such a code as his republic might require. With great sublimity of conception, he united the whole universe in one mighty and perfect community. Gods, and men, who are of the essence of gods, are included, by his hypothesis, in this stupendous commonwealth; and he piously labours to deduce from a celestial

* Plato. In *Phædr.* *pass.*

origin, the laws and institutions by which it is to be maintained and governed. But scarcely has he completed his rare and goodly structure, when he anticipates the ruin to which it is exposed. He beholds the approach of the spirit of the Academy, with its bold objections, and sophistical cavils; and, supplanting the silence of that sceptical hostility before which his fair and lofty system, like so many other magnificent speculations, would crumble away, he admits, like a true follower of the master he had chosen, the academical darkness and uncertainty in which all things are involved*.

Of the Platonic school, therefore, in which nothing was to be either affirmed or denied, but every thing to be doubted, the moral doctrines must have been impaired, in their authority and influence, by the uncertainty which was ascribed to them. Yet, convinced though he was of this dubiousness of things, the disciple of the Academy was to repose his confidence in the dreams of superstition. Omens, presages, sacrifices, the flight of birds, the appearances of the sky, were to be consulted for the purpose of discovering the will and obtaining the guidance of heaven; divination was alike to assist the conjectures of the wise, and to afford a light to the darkness of the ignorant; and, above all, the Oracle of Delphos, as was pretended, to which so many

* *Perturbatricem autem omnium harum rerum academiam, exoremus ut sileat, nam si invaserit in hæc, quæ satis scite instructa et composita videantur, nimis edet ruinas, quam quidem ego placare cupio, submovere non audeo. Cicer. de Legib. i. 13.* This is but one of many passages in his writings, which prove how firmly Cicero believed in the primary doctrine of the Academy; and he has, in various instances, availed himself with great dexterity of the scepticism of his master.

nations had been indebted for their noblest institutions, and which had been particularly venerated by Socrates himself, was to be humbly and piously supplicated for that guiding instruction, which the admitted infirmity of human reason so much and so perpetually required*.

Thus sceptical, at once, and superstitious, Plato proceeded to enuntiate his precepts. But the great principle of his laws was partial and circumscribed. Legislating for man less than the citizen, and for humanity than the state, he was, at best, but a political moralist, narrow in his views, and illiberal in his tenets. While he endeavoured to kindle in the minds of his countrymen the spirit of valour, of patriotism, and of self-devotion, he confined the exercise of those virtues to a spot; and, like Socrates and Aristotle, impressing on the rest of the world the seal of barbarism, devoted it to the pillage and persecution of the Greek†. Even the laws of domestic regulation were to be founded, not in moral wisdom, but political prudence; and all the charities of life, and all the affections of kindred, were to be sacrificed to what was denominated the public good. The sickly child was to be exposed, lest it should become a burden to the commonwealth. The wise and the brave of one sex were to be indulged in peculiar privileges of intercourse with the other, that they might increase their progeny for the common advantage. The rights and interests of marriage were

* Plato. de Repub. lib. v. Xenophon. Mem. lib. i. c. 1. § 2, 3.

† Plato. Repub. Socrates denominated the Greeks *φίλοι φιλοι*, and the barbarians, for such was the term applied to every other people, *καλιμαί φουσι*. The appellation was in perfect harmony with the principle.

to be governed by a principle equally odious and corrupt. The children were to be considered as the sole property of the republic; and women, "clothed" only in their virtues," were to become a common possession, that the son might not know the father, nor the father the son, and that all might become the right and family of the state*. In detailing these institutes, the philosopher, forgetting alike what he owed to himself and to public decorum, exults and wantons in the very grossness of Diogenes; and the courtly academician seems to be changed, by a degrading metamorphosis, into the disgusting cynic. Modesty and decency are violated without reluctance and reserve; the code, intended for moral and political regulation, is rendered, by the indecent minuteness of its details, offensive and odious; and the freedom and coarseness with which the sex are degraded into instruments of policy, valuable only as they give robust and healthy children to their country, cannot but provoke the reprobation or contempt of every generous and civilized mind, and excite astonishment that the lofty spirit of Plato

* Plato. de Repub. lib. v. I have not dared to sully my page with a more minute detail of these odious and pernicious laws. Plato has had his followers in modern times. "If," says Bayle, "we only consult reason as distinct from revelation, a man would make no more difficulty in disposing of his wife, than of his book; and were it not for a false and ridiculous jealousy, reason would rather advise a community of women." *Nouvelles Lettres Contr. Maimb. lett. xvii.*

Bolingbroke, the feeble sage, but accomplished courtier, has rivalled, on this subject, the philosophical freedom of Bayle. *Bolingb. Works, 4to, vol. v. p. 172.*

Puffendorf easily proves the folly and falsehood of these opinions. *De Jure Nat. et Gent. lib. vi. c. 1. § 15.*

should have thus descended to debase and insult, what it should have been proud to exalt and to protect*.

The religion, then, and philosophy of Greece and Italy, afford the most striking evidence of moral insufficiency. That the poets and the scholars who adorned those illustrious countries in ancient times, announced to mankind principles and maxims of distinguished wisdom; that every sect, without exception, produced great men, and inculcated noble precepts; that Zeno, Epictetus, Plato, Socrates, Marcus Antoninus, and Aristotle, constituted but a small portion of that constellation of genius and of wisdom which shed so much lustre on Rome and Athens, it would be vain and ungrateful to deny. But while we admit and rejoice in the occasional brightness, we may not forget the glooms by which it was so frequently obscured. “Non ex singulis
“vocibus philosophi spectandi sunt, sed ex perpetuate atque constantia†.” We are not to judge the philosopher by the casual and insulated sentences which he may utter, but by the general tenor of his doctrines; and if we have discovered, in the volumes of the ancient schools, the most signal inconsistencies and contradictions, the most pernicious intermixture

* I have adverted but slightly, in the preceding remarks, to the preceptive wisdom of Socrates. Plato and Xenophon have done justice to it, and the task was worthy of their genius. If, however, I could experience a pleasure in sullyng the honours with which the name of the first moralist of antiquity has been distinguished, I might not find it difficult, perhaps, to produce passages from the writings of his disciples, which would answer my purpose. The excellent translator of Aristophanes, Mr. Mitchel, has taught us to measure with accuracy the defects and merits of the illustrious Athenian.

† Tuscul. Disput. lib. v. c. 9. See also, De Finib. lib. ii. c. 22, 26.

of truth and falsehood, the most wild and wanton perversion of great powers to evil purposes, it may be permitted us to conclude that the moral wisdom of Greece and Rome was inadequate as it was proud, frail as it was dogmatic, and far more likely to deceive and corrupt, than to illuminate and purify the heart.

SECT. II.

The Hindu religion, like every other, occasionally wise in its moral precepts, and in its motives—Admirable maxims—Circumscribed in their utility by the manner in which they are announced, and counteracted in their influence by the temper of the religion which recommends them—The apathy of abstraction preferred to the works of virtue—False and partial estimate of morals—Celestial precedent—Cruelty to the outcast—Obscenity of the temples—Inconsistency and corruption.

“ HE, my servant,” says Krishnu, “ is dear to me,
 “ who is free from enmity, merciful, humble, patient
 “ of wrongs, resigned in sorrow. The man who per-
 “ forms all the duties of life, trusting the issue to
 “ the goodness of Brama, remaineth, like the leaf of
 “ the lotos, stable amid the waters. Let the virtue
 “ be in the deed, not in the event. Exercise hospita-
 “ lity, even to an enemy who enters into thy house,
 “ as the tree doth not withdraw its shade from the
 “ wood-cutter. Good men extend their charity to
 “ the vilest animals ; the Moon doth not withhold her
 “ light even from the cottage of the Chandala. Is
 “ this man one of us, or is he a stranger? Such is
 “ the reasoning of the ungenerous and cruel ; but to
 “ the good man the whole world is one family. True
 “ charity implies a heart free from worldly impurity;
 “ without purity all pretensions to that charity are

“ vain *. It is essential to real benevolence not to
“ envy the possessions of another, and not to suffer
“ the pursuit of gain to corrupt the heart, the temper,
“ or the tongue. Do not fondly say to yourself,
“ When I advance in years I will then practise bene-
“ volence ; and why ? because life is uncertain, and
“ passeth away like water poured into a broken
“ vessel ; therefore exercise thyself at the present
“ moment, and at the hour of death thy prayers shall
“ be heard. Never forget him whose friendship has
“ been extended to thee in the day of thy calamity ;
“ but remember him, if possible, in the seven stages
“ of thine existence ; for to forget a benefit received
“ is infamous, but instantly to cast away the recol-
“ lection of injury is noble. If he who has rendered
“ you a disinterested service, should afterwards do
“ you a mortal injury, forget the injury, remember
“ the service. The good father of a family, though
“ a mere mortal, is a fit companion for the Daivers,
“ and shall be found duly prepared for the world of
“ bliss. The sweetest tones of the flute or viol are
“ less melodious to a parent’s ear than the simple
“ music of an infant’s prattle. A good child is to
“ be considered as a treasure, first, as being the im-
“ mediate recompence of his father’s good deeds ;
“ secondly, because the parent’s fame and happiness
“ will be improved by the virtue of his offspring. No

* This maxim is as just as it is beautiful. If the heart be corrupted by worldly pleasures, it will be selfish and contracted ; if devoted to worldly interests, it will be proportionally estranged from sympathy and compassion ; if agitated by worldly strife and competition, it will be envious, malignant and unmerciful. What can be expected from a heart thus occupied and distracted by the world ? And can charity take root and bring forth fruits in such a soil ?

“ sensation is so gratifying as that of the soft cheeks
“ of one’s own child, no sound so delightful to his
“ mother as the voice of her infant *.”

Such is the language of the Hindu moralists ; and such are the sentiments which frequently abound in the religious books of the Bramin, and which may not be surpassed, either in the tone in which they are uttered, or in the doctrines which they enforce, by the best and brightest precepts of the Academician, or the Stoic, of ancient Greece.

But, whatever be the reason of man, the passions of the heart, at once the glory and the shame of human nature, are perpetually mingling with and perverting its discussions ; and, by the errors into which it is thus betrayed, on the most important, as well as on the most insignificant topics, we are admonished to temper with salutary caution our reliance on a guide whose firmest step is so insecure, and whose proudest wisdom is so frail.

The reason of the Hindu is, like that of all other mortals, subject to this perversion and this infirmity. It excites our admiration of the wisdom and energy which it occasionally displays ; but our admiration terminates in astonishment at the inconsistency and weakness with which it varies in its estimate of crime, and in its precepts of virtue.

I. In adverting to the lessons of morality by which the Braminical religion has been enriched and adorned, we are, first, to observe that they are circumscribed, in their utility, by the manner in which they have been announced. They are scattered through the pages of various volumes difficult of ac-

* Bagvat Geeta. pp. 40, 44. “ Ocean of Wisdom,” in Kindersley’s Sketches, &c.

cess, and of ambiguous authority. Sometimes, they are said to have issued directly from the lips of the gods, sometimes to have been promulgated by the inspired favourites of heaven, or compiled from the ample stores of sacred tradition. They are, nevertheless, perpetually blended with the wildest doctrines of absurdity and error. The passions, which they might otherwise purify and guide, are kindled by the tenets and observances of a sanguinary and a libertine superstition ; and he who attends the rites of the demon of Juggernaut, can scarcely be prepared to practise precepts, if he could collect them, which may inculcate the purity and necessity of virtue.

II. By the moral code of the Bramin, charity, as we have seen, is represented as the most essential of all duties. Yet the voice which proclaims and extols the maxim, sanctions, as a virtue of higher and more holy obligation, the unperforming apathy of ascetic life. He may be wise who goes forth among sentient beings to protect or bless them ; but the man of the most exalted wisdom, is he, who, careless of all other things, retires to waste his days in the solitudes of woods and deserts. Such a person, wandering over the earth in silence and abstraction, or lingering away his life at the root of a tree, or in the glooms of a cell, and subduing all the better feelings and affections of his nature, acquires perfection in this world, and secures felicity in the next ; and thus the great law of moral wisdom, which, binding man to man, and including each and all within the circumference of universal brotherhood, requires beneficent actions as the best test of obedience, and the most acceptable to heaven ; is opposed and superseded, in the religion of the Bramin, by that which says to man, Be human no more, retire from all the gracious offices of life,

forget the parent who gave you being, the child who demands your care, and the wife who merits your love ; and associate yourself with privation, and solitude, and misery, till, converted into a pure and perfect Yogee, the grave receive you into its bosom, and the gods prepare your reward.

III. In the system of moral precepts sanctioned by the religion of the Hindu, we may further trace the most extravagant inconsistency, and the most pernicious injustice. That which is deeply criminal in an inferior cast, may be considered as a light or venial trespass in a higher. The slightest offence to the least of the priestly order, is to outweigh the last of injuries inflicted on the inferior Hindu ; and the worst and most unpardonable of crimes in the afflicted Chandala, becomes expiable in a Bramin by an insignificant mulct. Even mercy is to be meted out according to the most absurd and barbarous distinctions. The Paria, who but breathes upon his superior, is declared worthy of death, by the same code which proclaims compassion and tenderness to the worm ; and, while the beast of the field is protected, by the just and gracious tenets of religion, from wrong, the ancient parent may be exposed without blame to the incursions of the tide, and left, unpitied, to struggle and perish in the retiring waters.

IV. It is obvious, too, that many of the causes by which the mythology of the Greek was impaired in its moral tendency, must operate, with equal effect, in the mythology of the Hindu. The Hindu professes a faith similar in its objects to that of the Greek. The gods of both exhibit examples of violence, of wrath, of malignity, and of wantonness, alike unfavourable and offensive to virtue. Each might equally justify his vices by celestial precedent ; and

to each the authority of his creed might furnish a plea for the most contradictory qualities, the cruelty that delights in the human sacrifice, and the debauchery which seeks and finds indulgence in the recesses of the temple.

Of such a system the influence and effects are analogous to the corruption of its principles. The guiding precept is rarely to be found, and he who seeks it is entangled in inconsistency and contradiction. The man of charity is reminded of the superior sanctity of the fanatic, and the fanatic is taught to rely, with implicit faith, on the saving efficacy of useless penance. The mulct is paid to enrich the priest, and the crime is more readily perpetrated, because it is so easily to be redeemed. We behold the poor and unhappy outcast, driven without mercy, and often for an imaginary offence, from the society of his fellow creatures, and from the temples of his gods. Cruelty and obscenity are transformed into devotional virtues. The gravest votary is not ashamed to witness the wantonness which dances round his altars; and the Gentoo, while he treads cautiously on the earth lest he should crush a reptile, and diffuses his charities as his priest requires, and performs his task of oblation and prayer with pious scrupulosity, is found to delight in the wild sacrifice of the funeral pile, and to mingle in the mercenary impurities which are encouraged for priestly gain in the pagodas of his idols*.

From a religion thus feeble for good, and efficient

* Orme, who was well acquainted with the Hindu character and institutions, adverts indignantly to both. *Histor. Fragm.* 432, 433, 434, &c. Indeed, to admit the institutions, is to admit the character. They are cause and effect.

for evil, we turn with mingled astonishment and sorrow. Admitting the beauty of its incidental precepts, we lament the insufficiency of its moral influence; and we behold another instance of the facility with which human reason abandons the lights of wisdom, to wander in the darkness of error and superstition.

SECT. III.

Advantages enjoyed by Mahomet—Moral precepts—Frequent excellence—The doctrine adopted to the sensuality or policy of its author—Cruelty, and vengeance, and persecution, and wrath, sanctioned by divine authority—Effects on the popular mind, and on the world—Humility and meekness in theory, arrogance and presumption in practice—The morality framed for a sect, and not for mankind.

IN the views which I have hitherto taken of human legislation, I have discovered little more than evidences of human frailty. Of every code, much that is good, and all that is evil, in man, may plead the authority and the sanction; and the mazed and erring disciple is submitted to a guide which exhibits for his imitation contradictory examples, or enjoins for his observance conflicting doctrines. Every system is a chaos in which the seeds of truth and falsehood, holiness and impiety, rectitude and crime, have been sown with a strange and wonderful inconsistency; and, while we contemplate those monstrous productions of mortal capacity, those temples of Babel which indicate at once the strength and weakness of man, the most opposite emotions may justly be excited in the mind, and we know not how to silence the discordant impressions of exultation and of pity, of admiration and of contempt.

The Apostle of Mecca might have avoided, without much difficulty, many of the vices which have been thus interwoven in the frame of other religions. He was admitted to the sources of Christian wisdom, and he drank largely and freely. In the Koran, accordingly, we discover precepts of unblemished excellence. The imagery of poetry is often employed to recommend the maxims of virtue. The lawgiver commands obedience with an authority frequently justified by the purity and utility of his laws; and the disciple, instead of being left to fluctuate in uncertainty and doubt, is edified by truths too explicit to be misinterpreted, and too clear to be misunderstood.

“ Whoso chooseth the present life and the pomps
“ thereof, unto them will be given the recompence of
“ their works, for that which they have done in this
“ life shall perish, and that which they have wrought
“ shall be vain. Slay not, except in a just cause.
“ Meddle not with the subsistence of orphans. Per-
“ form your covenant. Give good measure, and
“ weigh with a just balance. Walk not proudly in
“ the land, for thou canst not cleave the earth,
“ neither canst thou equal the mountains in stature.
“ Know ye not that life is only a long and a vain
“ amusement, and that worldly pomp, and the affec-
“ tation of glory among you, and the multiplication
“ of riches, shall at length wither, and become dry
“ stubble? Shew kindness to the poor and to your
“ neighbour who is of kin to you, and your neighbour
“ who is a stranger, and the captive whom your
“ right hand possesseth, for God loveth not the
“ proud nor the covetous, who conceal that which
“ God hath bountifully given them; and that which

“ they have covetously reserved shall be bound as
“ a collar about their neck at the day of judgment*.”
These are among the truths which the aspiring Arab frequently and emphatically announced to his followers ; and they shed, perhaps, a brighter and more useful light on the pages of the Koran, than that which illuminates the classic volumes of Plato or of Tully,

The Koran, however, has promised more than it has performed. Ambitious beyond all other religions in its aim, and proud and lofty in its pretensions, it aspires to the honour of a universal code for the moral and political regulation of man ; and we cannot be astonished that it has been found necessary to add to the system which pretends to embrace so wide a circle of interests and of duties, not less than seventy thousand precepts piously deduced from the ambiguous sources of traditionary wisdom, or laboriously and doubtfully inferred from the letter or the spirit of the original doctrine †.

The prophet may be less censured, perhaps, for the falsehood or vanity of a boast so ill fulfilled, than for the contradictions and inconsistencies which he has permitted to impair the truth and the value of his precepts. According to the changeful temper of his will, or the progressive profligacy of his desires, or the accommodation required by his political interests, the *divine* communications of one moment, were to be modified or rescinded by the *divine* communications of another. He found no dif-

* Koran. ch. ii. pp. 17, 18 ; chap. lvii. p. 420 ; chap. xvii. pp. 99, 100, 101 ; vol. ii. chap. ix. p. 351 ; chap. iv. p. 101. chap. iii. p. 88 ; chap. xxx. vol. ii. p. 258.

† Hamilton. Translat. of the Hedaya or Guide.

ficulty, and felt no shame, in producing a Sura adapted to the wild Euripus of his passions; and Gabriel was introduced, on innumerable occasions, to amplify or explain, amend or abrogate, as occasion required, the doctrines which had been already proclaimed by the same angelic authority, as the perfect and immutable ordinances of heaven*.

Even with the first and most obvious principles of morality, the impostor has intermingled the most vile and selfish doctrines. He legislated not to make men benevolent and wise, but to kindle in them, for his own views, the fires of fanaticism, and to train them to the proselyting barbarity of the sword. We trace him, in his precepts, through all the climax of ambitious persecution. At first, when he was less experienced in the arts of imposture, and the ground on which he stood was every moment ready to crumble from beneath his feet, he declared, with all the meekness of tenderness and of mercy, that he had no command to extend his religion by violence and force; and that the only influence he was permitted to use, was that of persuasion and of truth. But, in proportion as his followers multiplied around him, he displayed the temper and the spirit which meditated the subjection or extirpation of the infidel. A frantic zeal, a desolating bigotry, a savage crusade against tribes and realms which presumed to deny the authority of his mission, were then to be excited under the sanction of celestial command, and as means of procuring celestial favour. At length, presumption, encouraged by success, proclaimed

* Koran. ch. xvi. p. 89. Ludovic. Maracc. ch. ii. pp. 34, 35, 38, 41, &c. The abrogated passages were collected in one volume by the Imam, Abu Hashem Habatallah.

to the unbeliever the terrors of vengeance. To pillage, to persecute, and to destroy the enemies of Islam, were to be accounted as acts of holiness and of virtue; and the highest privileges and distinctions of this world and of the next, were lavishly promised to provoke in the children of the Koran an eternal enmity to the rest of mankind. "The sword," such is the language of the prophet of Mecca, "is the key of heaven and hell; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months spent in fasting and prayer. Whoso falleth in battle, his sins are forgiven at the day of judgment, his wounds shall be resplendent as vermillion, and odoriferous as musk, and the loss of his limb shall be supplied by wings of angels and cherubims*.—They who have suffered for my sake and been slain in battle, I will surely bring them into a garden watered by rivers. Do ye reckon the giving drink to the pilgrims, and the visiting of the holy temple, as meritorious as the acts performed by him who fights for the religion of God? They shall not be held equal by God. Do ye give alms? They shall be given only to those whose hearts are reconciled†."—Of these doctrines the result was analogous to the spirit. As we discover in the Koran no law of justice and of benevolence but for the Mussulman, we discover in the Mussulman no charity but for his sect. "Hell," he believed, "was to encompass the unbelievers;" and, in pursuing the infidel with his vengeance, "one of the two

* Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 256.

† Kor. vol. ii. ch. ix. p. 131; vol. i. ch. iii. p. 91; vol. ii. chap. ix. pp. 242, 251; vol. i. ch. iv. p. 73.

“ most excellent things ” was to be his portion, victory or martyrdom. Under the pretence of compelling the heathen to embrace his faith, he was to proceed from the plunder of caravans, and the extermination of tribes and villages, to the overthrow and devastation of states and empires. A bitter, a sanguinary, and an exclusive spirit, was thus fed at the very bosom of the religion, which, in its infancy, had lisped the precepts of equity and of compassion. The Deity himself was represented as communicating the precepts which blasphemed his wisdom by their inconsistency, and arraigned his goodness by their cruelty ; and a people were taught, by the preaching of an ambitious schemer, to find, in the very piety and devotion of their faith, the justification and the encouragement of all the crimes of intolerant barbarity*.

The whole history of the Mahometan religion demonstrates, by the most decisive evidence, the dreadful efficacy of the doctrines thus uttered by its founder, and thus sustained, as he pretended, by the sanctions of heaven. While he took care to justify, by divine authority, the vile and vagrant indulgence of his own appetites, he called into action the most furious and vindictive passions of his followers, and consecrated them to violence and to crime. A host of barbarous savages were let loose upon the world, to accomplish the divine will by persecution and massacre, and to nourish their religion with the blood of man, till it was to extend over prostrate nations the shadow of death. During the whole of the concluding years of the impostor, and through many succeeding centuries, a holy warfare was

* Kor. ch. ix. vol. ii. pp. 164, 249.

sustained for the most unholy of purposes. Arabia, Persia, Syria, Egypt, and many of the more distant regions of Africa and of Europe, groaned under the scourge of the most portentous despotism. The Jew and the Christian, perhaps, might be allowed to purchase a vile and galling toleration, embittered by the scorn and detestation of the new sect. But to idolators there was no tender even of this degrading mercy, and they were either to embrace the faith or to die. In the wild and convulsive fury of these pious wars, every principle of justice, of charity and of brotherhood, was disdained and sacrificed; and it seemed as if all bright, and holy, and saving virtue, were supposed, by the disciples of the Koran, to exist in the sacred rage of unrestricted proselytism, and the pious vengeance of un pitying extermination.

The Koran, then, is not to be considered as a system for the moral edification of men, but as an instrument to be first wielded by the execrable ambition of an impostor, and afterwards by the sanguinary fanaticism of a ferocious sect. It was not, however, solely as a member of an association of warriors and enthusiasts, that the compliant Mussulman was to receive the impress of his religion; he was also to be moulded by his creed in his individual character; and even if he had not been inflamed and barbarized as a sectary, there was yet enough to taint and corrupt him as a man.

Man, it is a trite but just observation, is a frail and erring being. Often nourishing unholy passions within, and assailed by dangerous temptations from without, he pursues his course through life, under various influences unfavourable to virtue; sometimes with rapidity where he ought to pause, and sometimes with languor where he ought to persevere.

Even his best motives are vitiated by impurity ; he wanders, not only from want of knowledge, but against knowledge ; and the waywardness of his will, and the weakness of his heart, as frequently leave him without inclination, as without strength, to subdue or to resist the seductions of the world.

To foment the arrogance, and encourage the incaution of such a being, is, in every sense, moral and religious, to corrupt him. He who should be taught to walk humbly, cannot be rendered wise by being instructed to walk proudly. He whose first knowledge should be the knowledge of himself, his weakness, his ignorance and his dependence, cannot be enlightened or edified by doctrines which impress him with superciliousness and presumption. The Arabian prophet seems not to have thought so. If he incidentally required humility of heart, the general tenor of his doctrines afforded a flagrant and pernicious contradiction to the precept. His disciples are perpetually represented as exclusively the favoured and elect of God. They are immeasurably elevated in hope and privilege above the rest of the world. They monopolize the grace of heaven, and leave nothing but its curses to the Christian, the Gentile and the Jew. The door of Paradise, which is to be closed for ever against the rest of mankind, is open solely for their reception ; and, instead of being reminded of their frailty and their transgressions, they are informed that they may not only fulfil, but surpass their duty ; that, having entitled themselves to divine mercy by their good deeds, they may also overflow with supererogatory virtues ; and that they may redeem from wrath the less righteous disciple of the faith, by transferring to his account a portion of their superfluous and super-

abundant merits*. With these persuasions deeply and indelibly impressed upon their mind, what room can be found for those graces of humility and meekness, which should be perpetually associated with human frailty? He whom the consciousness of infirmity should teach to proceed with salutary fear in the fulfilment of duty, will forget the feebleness of his nature in the pride of imaginary excellence. The heart will learn to repose a vain reliance on its strength and rectitude; and a contemptuous pity, or irreconcilable hatred, will be felt and exercised towards all those who shall not have imbibed the same arrogance of spirit from the same fountain of the Koran.

How far a religion which founds such doctrines on such sanctions, is worthy of the praise of the philosopher, or the acceptance of the world, we may now, perhaps, be able to determine. That it is not, in almost any sense, adapted to the character of such a frail and erring being as man, will be scarcely denied by the candid enquirer, who adverts to the pride which it engenders, the inconsistencies and contradictions by which it is disgraced, the example which it exhibits in the various vices of its author, and the spirit of rapine and devastation which it breathes and propagates. A nation of warriors and fanatics, who were to flourish by oppression and live by blood, might be urged to victory, or stimulated to spoliation, by the views which it opens, and the precepts and promises which it inculcates and affords; but to the rest of men it could bode nothing save misery and oppression in this world, and final rejec-

* Kor. ch. xvii. vol. ii. p. 107. Garnier. Vie de Mahom. vol. ii. p. 376.

as the avenger of crime, and the remunerator of virtue. By faith he contemplates the mercies of mediation, of redemption, and of grace. By faith he extends his views beyond the dwellings of earth, to the city of God. By faith he connects the performances and sufferings of this life with the allotments of eternity. By faith he is gifted with the vision of angels, to contemplate, till he aspires to, the joys of everlasting felicity, and to behold, till his heart melt with reverence and awe, the outskirts of the light which encompasses the throne and majesty of heaven. What high and purifying ideas are thus awakened in the breast! What noble and inspiring anticipations are impressed on the soul! What contempt is excited for all those things which contribute to corrupt and fascinate the children of Mammon! And what zeal is kindled to sustain trial to the end, and to triumph over the powers of darkness and of sin!

This faith is inseparably connected with the purity of regeneration, and, in proportion only as it regenerates, is it just and holy. It is not an enthusiastic and visionary belief, an implicit and fruitless admission of mysterious doctrines, a fervid and abstract impression to which salvation is annexed, without any reference to right and wrong. It is that persuasion which ennobles motive, and enlightens reason, and kindles the best and highest affections, by the grandeur of its views, and the holy and inspiring confidence of its expectations. It is wisdom practical as well as pious, which connects man by new and more interesting ties with his Maker, which unfolds the mercy and the justice of the Cross to discipline the temper and enforce the obedience of the heart; which represses guilt by the annunciations of judg-

ment, and encourages virtue by promises of recompense ; which opens the prospect of the future for the edification of the present ; and which, while it awakens and justifies the high ambition of immortality, converts the children of earth into the disciples and the heirs of heaven.

Singularly framed, indeed, must be the heart of that man who can look up, through the medium of faith, to an Almighty Governor watching over and regulating all events ; a recording spirit to whose eyes are open the most secret recesses of the soul ; a redeeming, mediating, and sanctifying God ; a tribunal of judgment before which all the generations of men are one day to bow down, and receive the final decree and unalterable allotment—Singularly constituted must be that man's heart who can contemplate objects like these, without being impressed with the resolution to restrain his will, to correct his passions, and to consecrate his future life to holiness and to virtue.

Nor is Christian hope, perhaps, less fruitful of salutary persuasions, than Christian faith.

The religion of the Gospel is no gloomy and melancholy system of painful ceremonies, afflicting rites, and ascetic austerities. Represented though it has been by some weak and fanatical minds, as sent forth to detach mankind from the joys and comforts of life, it disclaims the repulsive rigours with which ignorance and despondency have loaded and disgraced it. Hope is not merely to be indulged, but is required and sanctioned as a cardinal virtue. That which is to be the happiness of man, becomes matter of precept and of obligation ; and evangelical trust is permitted and inspired, for the stay and support of evangelical integrity.

The hope thus authenticated, becomes, at once, a light and a blessing to the heart. Elevating our contemplations, as it does, to a Deity no less perfect in wisdom and goodness than in power ; teaching us where to repose our confidence in the day of trial, and to seek for aid in the period of conflict ; contrasting the evils and sufferings of the present life, with the palms, and robes, and scepters of the just in heaven ; it affords ample grounds for those emotions of love and reverence towards God, which quicken the sense of duty and obligation in the heart. And, while it speaks to us of future blessedness, while it announces the glad tidings of favour and acceptance with the Almighty, and proclaims to the sinner the means by which he may be saved ;—can we hear the voice that tells us of these things, without being impressed, in the most affecting manner, with a consciousness of the obligations we owe to God, and without being encouraged to contend for the prize of our high calling, and to run with patience the race that is set before us ?

Hope and faith, in their genuine and evangelical character, cannot but exist together, and co-operate for the moral improvement of man. Hope springs from faith, faith is animated by hope. Faith is obedience, hope desire. Faith elevates our views to celestial blessings, hope aspires to their attainment. Faith exhibits to us the Omnipotent in the mighty but merciful operations of redemption and providence ; hope deduces the inference from the facts which are thus disclosed, and reposes on the attributes which are thus displayed. Faith soars from the cross of Calvary to the throne of mediation and of grace ; hope feeds on the persuasions which are thus matured in the bosom of man. It is

the peculiar office of faith to tender to the sinner, dead in his trespasses and sins, the means of life. It is the peculiar office of hope, rich in the consolations of the gospel, to become the soother of human misery, to rock the cradle of old age, to seat itself by the bed of disease, to hold the cup of peace to the parched lip, and to soften the agonies of death by prospects of heaven. In thus administering to the aid of afflicted man, it establishes the resignation and fortitude of the heart, and supports and encourages the perseverance of virtue. Without it, the Christian would be left to suffer in darkness and despair; and, with it, darkness is converted into light, and despair is elevated to confidence and joy.

If there be some who describe evangelical hope but as the fair vision of enthusiastic credulity, a fabled form of ideal and unsubstantial beauty, which fades into nothing before the light of reason and truth, how many are there in the secret walks of life to testify the reality of its existence, and the efficacy of its power! That which the pretended philosopher may deride, the martyr and the saint take to their bosom; and suffering is endured, and integrity is sustained, with heroic magnanimity. Sad, indeed, would be the pilgrimage of man, if his trust and expectation were confined to this dim spot. Scanty would be the encouragement of virtue, if it were limited in its confidence to earthly recompence. But, when the voice of promise is heard, and evangelical hope proclaims the everlasting destiny of the children of God, sorrow may well rejoice, and integrity will persevere. The glooms of trial are gilded as if by a beam from heaven; and the disciples of virtue prosecute their journey with a fortitude

and a trust which sustain their strength, and cheer and elevate their spirit.

In this manner the institutions of Christianity, and the views of faith and hope, contribute to form and fortify the moral temper of man. We can scarcely meditate on the being and attributes of God, as they are described in the Gospel, with less salutary effect. In the religion of the Greek and of the Hindu, the divine example was often to encourage the breach of the divine precept; in that of the Koran, the authority of the Almighty was brought down to afford its sanction to fraud, to libertinism, and to persecution. The Christian is taught to look up to a deity of a different character, and to deduce from the views which are opened upon him of celestial justice and mercy, inferences in the highest degree salutary to piety and to virtue. What encouragement to sin can he experience, who beholds in the being he adores but sinless perfections? What inducements to injustice, to malignity, to cruelty, or to falsehood, may not be resisted by him who venerates in God but illimitable benevolence and immutable truth? Or is he not to learn the offence and danger of disobedience and of crime, and to feel, deeply and intensely, the obligations of virtue, while he raises his eyes to him whose justice is concerned to punish the guilty and recompence the upright, and who has declared that his vengeance shall overtake the first, and his blessing descend upon the last.

From these more general views we may proceed to examine the morality itself which derives from them such high authority, and such affecting motives. I. And here we may first observe, that the sum

and substance of the Christian law are included in the love of God, and the love of man ; that the love of man is described as the test of the love of God ; and that the good and merciful offices of the first are required and enforced as yet more acceptable to heaven, than the prayers and sacrifices of the last. Consistently with this great and primary principle, the Gospel, in almost every page, adds precept to precept, and motive to motive, to purify the heart, in the first instance, from all those evil and malignant passions which are directly opposed to individual and social happiness ; and, in the next, to awaken that warm and generous benevolence which extends itself in good will, and, as far as possible, in good deeds, to all the family of mankind. It may be, therefore, affirmed, that wherever the religion of Christ prevails in its purity, “ it promotes the innocence of village neighbourhood, and inculcates “ a universal community of bosom * ;” the innocence, which mingles itself in the intercourse of life, with guileless and affectionate simplicity ; and the community, which flows from a spirit of unsuspecting amity, and connects man with man in the bonds of confidence and of love.

The graces of benevolence which are thus inculcated by evangelical wisdom, are not merely to display themselves in beneficent deeds. They are to reach and humanize the manners and modes of life ; to extend their influence to the forms of intercourse, and the habits of intimacy ; and, for the polished dissimulation, the politeness existing only in pretence, and the smooth and artificial address in which the world may instruct its disciples, to substitute the

* Davenant. Pref. to Gondibert.

courtesy which issues from the heart, the patience that endures all things rather than offend in any, and the gentleness which subdues asperity and wrath, by the unrebuking meekness of its demeanour, and by that gracious and unassuming spirit which, “mind-
“ing not high things, but condescending to men of
“low estate, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh
“not its own, is not easily provoked, and, as much
“as possible, liveth in peace, and kindness, and
“good will with all men*.”

Behold this blessed virtue in action ! It cloathes the naked, feeds the hungry, visits the sick, strengthens the infirm, reconciles the hostile, and exercises itself in all good, and kindly, and compassionate deeds. Is this enough ? Are we to believe that the charity, occupied in this wide circle of active and endearing benevolence, has fulfilled its duty ? On the contrary, the charity which proceeds no further, is but as “sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.” “Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.” Charity is to inspire benevolence of heart, as well as beneficence of action. It is to rest upon the lips, as well as issue into deeds. It is to weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice. It is to throw a veil over the infirmities of others, and to cover with its own garment the multitude of the sins of men. It is to leaven and sweeten the whole mass of human qualities and opinions ; and, finally, in the accomplishment of its duties, “it is to bear
“all things, believe all things, hope all things, and
“endure all things,” with a spirit that thinketh no

* Epist to the Romans xii. 16, 18.

evil, that envieth no good, and that, if an enemy hunger, feedeth him, and, if he thirst, giveth him to drink*.

The love of fame, the pride, the vanity, and the ostentation, which so perpetually vitiate the deeds and the motives of men, have no part in the composition of this divine virtue. The respect, the admiration, and the applause of the world, have nothing to do with its temper and its views. It is of a spirit wholly above the world, and it looks to God only, his favour and his will, for its recompence and its obligation. "With whatsoever measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again; and when thou doest thine alms, let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret; and thy father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly†." "But if thou doest thine alms before men, ye have no reward of your father which is in heaven‡."—Such is the pure and unostentatious nature of genuine charity. Superior to the unstable and uncertain, or, if stable and certain, the inadequate recompence of the world, it yet listens to the sigh that is heaved in the poor man's cottage; and it goes forth to do good by stealth, with the elevating persuasion that it is beheld by that eye which never slumbers nor sleeps, and is sanctioned by that wisdom which delights in the oblations of mercy.

Other virtues are enjoined in the Gospel, with a frequency and fervour that imply their importance in the scale of duty. But charity, in which, indeed,

* Epist. Romans xii. 16, 18; and to Corinth. xiii. 7. In these two chapters the apostle completes his picture of charity.

† Matt. vii. 2; vi. 3, 4. ‡ Matt. vi. 1.

all other virtues are included; calls forth the peculiar zeal and eloquence of the Apostle. "Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet, and, if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*." All else, the tongue of men and of angels, the understanding of all mysteries and of all knowledge, the spirit of prophecy, the gift of faith, so that we may remove mountains, without charity is nothing worth. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be tongues, they shall cease, whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, and when that which is perfect is come, that which is imperfect shall cease. But charity shall never fail. And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity †."

How beautiful and how forcible is language like this. Charity shall never fail! The pomps and glories of the world shall expire in the grave. Time and nature shall sink into one common tomb. Faith shall be lost in vision, hope in certainty, prophecy in accomplishment, and all virtue, and all gifts, and all acquirements, without charity, shall be nothing worth. But charity shall abide with us for ever. In this world it shall be our guide. It shall soothe and cheer us with happy recollections amid the pangs of dissolution. It shall accompany us to the regions of immortality. It shall attend us to the tribunal of heaven. It shall flourish with us through all eternity; and it shall bring down upon our souls the

* Epist. Rom. xiii. 9, 10. † Epist. Corinth. xiii. 1, 2, 3.

reward promised to the good and faithful servant, "even the blessing of the Lord for evermore."

II. The law of the Gospel, which, in its primary precepts is thus beautiful and wise, is restricted by no partial favour to a sect or a race. In all other religions we are struck by the occasional accommodation of their precepts to local prejudices and habits, to political interests and views, or to popular humours and superstitions. The legislator is perpetually governed by some consideration of climate, some form of the times in which he lives, some pre-established error of the people, whom it is his object to conciliate, or some design originating in his own selfishness or ambition; and the frail and fallacious doctrines adapted by ignorance or artifice to time and place, to a moment and to a spot, are, accordingly, substituted for the essential laws of universal and of eternal truth. Whereas the Christian code embraces the world. Unadulterated by the viciousness of human policy, and utterly superior in its aim to all the designs of human ambition, it descends not to accommodate itself to the petty and transitory institutions of a period or of a district, to the established errors of religious persuasion, or to the little attachments of national prejudice. It moulds the Christian, not into the creature of a creed, but into the brother of his species. The law, which says to him, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, instructs him that the unbeliever as well as the believer, the Gentile as well as the Christian, the stranger from the uttermost parts of the earth, as well as the associate of his family and his bosom, are entitled to the good and generous offices which it prescribes. Is there want, or sorrow, or ignorance, or discord? No matter in whom they exist, he is, as far as possible, to feed, to alleviate, to

enlighten, or to compose them; and the servant as he is of a master who legislated and lived for mankind, to mankind he is to extend himself in the affections of brotherhood, and in the zeal and fervour of charity.

The Greek and the Roman were educated for republics which considered all other nations as the legitimate objects of war, of pillage, and of oppression. The Gospel, on the contrary, breathes the spirit of universal harmony and good will. It not only denounces, with a sublime energy, all those passions of revenge, of retaliation, and of violence, which arm man against man in ferocious conflict*; but seeks to substitute for them a placability not to be exhausted by reiteration of offence, and a humanity which even to an enemy stretches out the right hand of fellowship and of love. “Ye have heard
“ that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and
“ a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, bless them
“ that curse you, do good to them that hate you,
“ and pray for them who despitefully use you and
“ persecute you†.” And, when our Saviour was rejected in the village of the Samaritans, and two of his disciples required of him whether they should call down fire from heaven to consume the guilty; what was his reply? “Ye know not what manner of spirits

* Les anciens elevoient des temples a la vengeance; cette passion, mise aujourd'hui au nombre des vices, etoit alors comptée parmi les vertus. Dans un siècle trop guerrier pour n'être pas un peu feroce, l'unique moyen d'enchaîner la colere, etoit d'attacher le deshonneur a l'oubli de l'injure, de placer toujours la tableau de la vengeance a cote du tableau de l'affront. De L'Esprit. Discours. ii. ch. xix. 137, 8. The ferocity is admitted; but what is the justification offered by the philosophy of Helvetius!

• Matt. v. 4, 5, 6.

“ ye are of. The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them !”—Thus, in opposition to the narrow wisdom of all preceding legislators, thus does the New Covenant address itself to the children of men, in the language of pure and unlimited benevolence. What would be the result of such doctrines, if they were not resisted in their tendency by the vile vices and passions of our nature, we may safely conjecture. Righteousness and peace would prevail over the earth. Discord would be softened into amity and mercy. Men would learn to consider themselves as partners in one common interest, subjects of one common sovereign, and children of one common father ; and all Christian nations, moulded into one tranquil family, and bound together by one bond of reciprocal good-will, would participate, with the affectionate intercommunity of brethren, the blessings of peace, and the gifts of providence.

To the diffusion of this placable and benignant temper the Gospel contributes, by the views which it opens of the divine nature, and the mercies which it tenders of divine acceptance. The religious doctrines harmonize with the moral precept, and the harmony is never broken by a discordant tenet. God is not exhibited to a sect only, arrayed in mercy and in grace. The paternity which embraces one, embraces all. The same sun which shines, and the same dews which fall, on the few, shine and fall on the many. There is no distinction at variance with the universal brotherhood of man. All human beings, of all generations, are intended to be participants of the same privileges of grace and favour. The voice which invites men to the temple of salvation, addresses itself to the whole world, and for the whole world the blood of the Son of Man was shed upon the cross, and the

covenant of righteousness proclaimed. The anathemas pronounced by leaders and by sects, and the persuasions which subdivide the race of man into so many hostile and discordant associations, are thus rebuked and condemned by the spirit of the Gospel; and Christianity may indeed be considered as a tree of life, not springing up in the inclosure of any peculiar race, nor exclusively sheltering beneath its branches any peculiar people, but freely tendering its protecting shade, and its sustaining fruits, to all the nations of the earth.

III. He who ratified the dispensation which, in this manner, includes all mankind in one great household, under the same father, redeemer and mediator, did not think it enough to scatter abroad the seed of precept, but to prepare the soil for its reception. Laws, however useful and wise, would be of little avail, if they were to refer only to external conduct. The tenor of active life will correspond with the dispositions that prevail within. The malignant spirit will issue into malignant deeds. The stream will be vitiated by the impurity which corrupts its source. The Christian religion, therefore, addresses itself with peculiar earnestness to the heart, and seeks to remedy the imperfect influence of law, by purifying the fountains of those disorders which spread over the world in misery and crime. In co-operation with the precept which is to act without, the fervent and holy admonition addresses itself to the infirmities which require reproof and correction within. The whole Gospel affords an evidence, in every page, of the pure and affectionate wisdom with which it communes with the spirit, and disciplines the temper of men, and seeks to lay the foundation of the virtues which it prescribes, in the bosom of its disciples.

“ Ye have heard that it was said, thou shalt not
 “ commit adultery. But I say unto you, whosoever
 “ looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already
 “ committed adultery with her in his heart. Make
 “ the tree good, and its fruits will be good also, for
 “ every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but
 “ every evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. Blessed
 “ are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. But
 “ out of the evil heart proceed not only evil thoughts,
 “ but murder, theft, adultery, false witness, blas-
 “ phemy. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees,
 “ hypocrites ! for you make clean the outside of the
 “ cup or of the platter, but within are full of extortion
 “ and excess. Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees,
 “ hypocrites ! for ye are like whited sepulchres which
 “ indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full
 “ of all uncleanness. Ye fools, did not he which made
 “ that which is within, make that which is without
 “ also*?” Solemn but salutary is the lesson which is
 thus taught. The moral structure is not to be raised
 upon the foundation of mere external obedience. That
 would be but the structure of the Scribe or Pharisee.
 To be the structure of the Christian, the foundation
 must be laid in a pure and disciplined spirit: and
 it must be recollected, that crime designed, is crime
 perpetrated; and that the law which regulates the
 conduct of man, will have done nothing if it have not
 also reached the recesses of the soul, and rectified
 the thoughts, the passions, and the will.

And how is the law enforced, which is thus to
 penetrate and cleanse the soul ! By our fellow
 creatures actions only can be weighed, and motives
 only surmised. But, the Gospel, utterly uninfluenced

* Matt. xvii. 17 ; xv. 18 ; xxiii. 25, 27.

by the judgment of man, impresses the persuasion that, independent of all action, it is the condition of the soul which is to constitute our true character in the estimation of God. While we are instructed that the whole internal frame of our nature is open before him, and that every thought which enters into the heart, and every passion, and tendency, and desire, which are felt in the most secret recesses of the bosom, are reached by his glance; we are instructed that it is not so much the external obedience, as the spirit from which it flows, that renders us "acceptable in his sight." The law must indeed be observed in conduct, but it is the motive which is to consecrate the observance of the law; and the motive being impure, the observance, however strict, is "nothing worth." We are called upon, therefore, by the scrutiny and judgment to which we are subject, "to keep the soul with all diligence," that our obedience may be in spirit as well as in deed; and we are to recollect that to become, in any wise, profitable servants before God, we must add to the sacrifice of a good life, the more holy and perfect sacrifice of a pure heart.

The great enemy of doctrines like these, is the world. Man is there perpetually attracted by pomps, and vanities, and pleasures, and interests, which tend to bind him to the earth, and to taint his spirit. The ceaseless recurrence of corrupt example co-operates with the pride and sensuality which are so often kindled by the temptations that surround him, to estrange his heart from truth and virtue; and appetites are cherished, and views are formed, which confine his desires to low and sordid temporalities, and incessantly contend for victory with all the better and brighter qualities of his nature.

In a character thus debased, the ambition of proud and generous attainments, the exalted principle, the high and noble motive, the love and admiration of what is good, the generous detestation of what is evil, without which there can be nothing laudable and lovely in human nature, are gradually impaired, till they are finally destroyed; and he whose spirit bore the impress of divinity, who was framed in the likeness of God, for the enjoyment of eternity, becomes, in this manner, a degraded, and, therefore, a miserable being, in whom the man is lost in the criminal, and the heir of heaven in the slave of earth.

The religion of Christ presents itself to stay this plague. It instructs us with a wisdom, which no antient philosopher has approached, how to estimate the world and its blessings, and how to resist its temptations and sins. Not only are its doctrines in opposition to all the little, iniquitous, and contemptible pursuits of this mortal scene; not only does it call on all men to controul and sub-
“ due the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and
“ the pride of life,” those degenerate and earthly passions, which are exclusively occupied in the worship of Mammon; but we are emphatically told that even the affinities of kindred, even our own life, are to be hated, if they stand in competition with Christian duty, and are to be preserved only by a desertion of the obligations and the hopes of our Christian calling*. And on what reason is the

* “ If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” Luke xiv. 26. To hate, evidently implies that we should not suffer such things to interfere with our duty to God; and Saint Matthew may explain the more

doctrine founded, and by what motive is it enforced? Are we thus to deny and subdue ourselves in compliance with the meer command of an austere master? Are we enjoined, without any paramount and compensating object, thus to extinguish within us all that is earthly in our passions and appetites? No. The gospel places the emptiness of the world on one side; the value of our immortal soul, and the favour of God, on the other; and, contrasting the treasures laid up on earth, "which rust and moth doth corrupt, and which thieves may break through and steal, with those in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal;" it leaves its disciples, so instructed, either to seek the fugitive and fallacious good which the friendship of Mammon confers on his worshippers; or the approbation of the Almighty, and the eternal blessedness, which are assured to the pure in heart.

In thus reclaiming its disciples from the world, it demands no unnecessary sacrifice of the enjoyments, and no ascetic insensibility to the intercourse of life. That which is to extinguish in the heart all low and sordid attachments to the things of the earth, is to purify and augment the genuine sources of human happiness. If the base and grovelling appetites, which become insatiable by indulgence, are to be repressed and humbled; if the unhallowed passions, which, sacrificing duty to pleasure, lay the sure foundation of remorse and sorrow in the bosom, are to be chastised and mortified; if every desire is to be

forcible but more enigmatical language of Saint Luke. "He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son and daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." Matt. x. 37.

extinguished, which is criminal in its pursuits, or licentious in its enjoyments; this holy purification of the heart, this sanctifying regeneration of its inclinations and will, this wise and evangelical discipline of its affections, render it only more capable of higher and nobler attachments, and of more exalted and undisturbed felicity. For the miserable and transitory gratifications which occupy the hours and corrupt the spirit of the votary of the earth, will be substituted the solid peace and consecrated enjoyments of purity and of virtue; and the genuine professor of the gospel, after all the renunciations and self-correction to which he is called, shall have reason to conclude that the very austerities of the Christian religion are announced in the spirit of goodness and of mercy, and that the most rigid of its prohibitions is so far from being incompatible, as some pretend, with the enjoyments and economy of the present life*, that it most effectually promotes the first, and most happily influences and improves the last.

IV. The Gospel not only requires us to subdue the world and the lusts thereof, but has enjoined a series of virtues which the world, in the foolishness of its wisdom, generally decries as pusillanimous and base. The patient and lowly endurance of evil; the submission which yields with silent humility to insult and wrong; the temper which seeks for reconciliation, where the man of the world would demand redress; the meek and complying spirit indulgent to the prejudices and even to the obstinacy of others;

* Jenyns, in his very paradoxical and often mischievous Treatise on the Internal Evidences of the Christian Religion, affirms that the patient and long-suffering virtues enjoined by Christianity, are adverse to the whole economy of human life, and calculated "to put an end to commerce, manufactures, industry, and the arts." *Evidences*, p. 135.

all these peaceful and gentle dispositions, so adverse to the sentiments and views of earthly spirits, are repeatedly and earnestly inculcated by evangelical wisdom, and assigned a high and important rank in the catalogue of Christian duties. "Resist not evil. "Whoso shall smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If any man shall sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him take thy cloak also. "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Blessed are the poor in spirit. "Be ye not called master, for one is your master, even Christ; and he that is greatest among you, shall be your servant." For such principles we look in vain to the systems of the legislators and philosophers of the world. The legislators and philosophers of the world would probably consider them as calculated only "to render the people who should adopt them, an easy prey to the violence and ambition of surrounding nations*;" and they, indisputably, authorize us to conclude, that the virtues of the hero, on whose achievements and glory the poet and the historian delight so much to descant, are of less value, in the estimate of the Gospel, and have less affinity with the Christian character, and less concern in Christian hopes, than the yielding, submissive, unassuming, and lowly spirit, of the most humble and self-mortified of men.

He who prescribed a temper thus contemptible in the estimate of worldly minds, was not anxious to render his followers great and warlike, but peaceful and good; not to kindle the dominating passions of the earth, but to repress and to extinguish them. One of the great objects of his mission was to diffuse abroad the concord and harmony of brotherly asso-

* Bayle.

ciation, and to unite mankind in one family of assenting minds. With such a purpose it would have been little consistent to excite that keen sensibility to wrong, that aspiring ambition, that love of glory, that ready and rigorous resistance of evil, which so often prevail in the intercourse of individuals and of nations. In promoting qualities of this character, he would have afforded his sanction to all those violent and contentious passions, which generate so many disorders and so many miseries among men, and the exercise of which, whatever energy of talent and character it might possibly call forth, would every where augment, an hundred fold, the quantity of crime, of suffering, and of sorrow. Whereas, the meekness, the lowliness, the patience, the placability, the humble and submissive spirit, which he required, are but so many sources of private and public happiness and virtue. They stand opposed to the violence, the envy, the wrath, and the malignity, of men. They purify the elements which disturb the atmosphere of life with storm and tempest. The principles of discord in the bosom of man, are neutralized by their influence, and the bonds of fellowship and peace more closely drawn. Wherever they prevail, we proportionally trace them in these, or similar, effects. The bitter waters which issue from the fountains of human strife, they contribute to sweeten and to purify; and quarrels are terminated, and dissensions reconciled, and enmities allayed, which, otherwise, would have issued into excess and crime, and disturbed the harmony and elicity of life*.

* The cool and temperate Paley adopts a stronger language—Without the disposition recommended by the Gospel," says he,

V. It has been affirmed, that qualities directly opposed to the meek and lowly spirit of the Gospel, are necessary in the conduct and progress of human affairs; and, that such qualities may stimulate exertion, and call forth the powers and energies of men, it is not necessary to deny. But the powers and energies so excited are ministrant to evil; or, if any benefit be produced, the benefit is occasional or rare, and seldom unaccompanied by crimes and mischiefs which are deeply and widely felt. What is the hostility of war, but another term for animosity and bloodshed? What is retaliation of wrong, but a perpetuation of malignity and of wrath? What is the pride of opposition and contest, but a spirit fruitful of misery to itself and to its opponents? The Gospel of Christ has, therefore, rebuked the temper of worldly resistance and violence, and required the meek and subdued disposition which the world condemns. The disciple of the new covenant, instead of triumphing over the his fellow creatures, was to seek only to triumph over himself. For the rage of conflict was to be substituted the meekness of placability and of peace; and if, in the quiet and submissive virtues which are thus required, there may be found any quality of feebleness and pusillanimity, who will deny that this pusillanimity is preferable to the ready and vigorous resentment, and the quick jealousy of honour, which distinguish the heroes of the earth, and which, in their best

“ enmities would not only be frequent, but, once begun, would be eternal, for each retaliation would be a fresh injury, and consequently would require a fresh satisfaction; and no period could be assigned to the reciprocation of affronts, and the progress of hatred, but that which closes the lives, or at least the intercourse of the parties. Evidences of Christianity. Part ii. c. 2.

character, are pregnant only with active crime and diffusive evil.

The language in which these doctrines has been announced is, indeed, forcible and emphatic. But it was incidental to the mode of instruction adopted by our Saviour, which proceeded not by proof but by authority, not by disquisition but by precept, that the rules which he enjoined should be expressed in absolute terms, and the application and the distinctions be left to the conscience and the reason of the hearer. The rules would have been of little use, if they had not been so expressed. In proportion to the strength of the natural or acquired propensities which they were to oppose; in proportion as they referred to the disposition and character of men, and were to demand not so much a mere specific compliance with the letter, as an adaptation of the heart to the spirit, of the law, they were to be enunciated in a manner which might leave as little room as possible for the disputes of cavil, and the misapprehension of ignorance. Delivered in more feeble and flexible terms, they would have been perpetually subject to sophistry and debate. In the terms in which they have been promulgated, they are either never to be mistaken, or so mistaken as to do harm. If we be explicitly commanded not to resist evil, and if we are to forgive those who have trespassed against us not until seven times, but until seventy times seven, what injury has the Christian world hitherto suffered from too much placability and too much forbearance? What mischief has the individual experienced from the most perfect adoption of the rule, compared with the consequent improvement and tranquillity of his heart? Or does not he who establishes in his own

bosom the temper and disposition required by the full meaning of the maxim, employ the best possible method of improving the benevolence, and of calming and rectifying the passions, of his nature ? Whereas, in the very degree in which the rule is infringed, individuals and nations suffer. Evil dispositions are indulged, and evil effects follow. The happiness of society is impaired by private and public discord. The brightest virtues of charity are extinguished in the contests of conflicting spirits ; and violence, and uproar, and confusion, prevail and riot in the habitations of men.

If we now advert to the moral doctrines and the moral influence of the Gospel, even as they have been here imperfectly displayed, we may be authorized to affirm the high and transcendant nature of that wisdom, which tenders its light and edification to the Christian disciple. The views which have been disclosed of the relationship of God to man, and of man to God ; the rites and institutions of the religion, in their tendency, their object, and their design ; the faith and hope which are enjoined as duties, and come to us in blessedness ; co-operate, powerfully and happily, with the more direct precept, to improve, to elevate, and to purify the heart. And what are the precepts ? We behold them in their consistency, their tendency, and their universality, elevating the affections, and regulating the lives, of men ; promoting the dignity, the happiness, and the excellence of social beings ; diffusing peace, harmony, and brotherly love, over the earth ; repressing all that is evil in our nature, and cherishing and promoting all that is good ; and sufficient, not merely for the guidance of nations and of times, but for the guidance and illumination of the whole human race,

in all times and in all nations. Instead, then, of comparing them with the frail and, often, conflicting dogmas of other religions, or with the loftiest maxims of philosophers and of schools, in the most distinguished periods of science and civilization, we embrace them as not unworthy of the inspiration to which they are attributed, and we bend in gratitude before the Religion by which they have been consecrated and sanctified for the perpetual benefit and edification of mankind.

CHAPTER VIII.

INSTRUCTION OF THE POOR.

SECT. I.

Means of public instruction under the religion of Greece and Italy—The discussions of the schools undisturbed by religion or the laws—Little practical information derived from them—Popular ignorance and superstition perpetuated by the co-operating power of laws and priests—The lower orders of men considered as incapable of progressive instruction, and as requiring the restraint of religious despotism—Their creed a prescriptive and sanctified delusion, kindling the zeal but perpetuating the ignorance of their faith—No teaching in the temples—The lofty but unsupported pretensions of the Eleusinian mysteries—The initiated few little edified, the uninitiated many neglected and despised—The sense of civil obligation, the love of fame, of glory, and of country, substituted for the impressions and motives of moral truth—Defects of the substitution.

IN the constitution of the Greek republics, there was little to retard, and much to accelerate, the progress of civilization and letters. Every individual was free to cultivate the learning, and assume the garb, of the philosopher. The schools of science were perpetually open to the multitude; and the knowledge acquired by the freeman and the sage, might frequently descend to illuminate the slave.

It was fortunate, as some have thought, that in Greece, there was no body of men set apart from their birth for the service of religion, and destined to become the guardians of the rights and institutions of worship.

The prevailing superstition was maintained with less vigilance, and religious persecution more rarely exercised. Philosophers of various sects arose, among whom, questions, calculated to exercise or to strengthen the faculties of men, were laboriously and zealously discussed. Theories of mythology were framed and admitted. If it might not be safe to resist with open and flagrant hostility the long established opinions of men on the subject of religion, and if the Diomedes of the schools might not dare to cope directly with the gods, a wide latitude was afforded to speculations which did not force themselves on the notice of the magistrate and the priest. The liberty was indeed to be exercised with discretion; and the popular faith was not to be insulted by the open impiety of philosophical objection; but it was easy to conform to a restriction which still left room enough for wide and ample speculation; and it was found, in fact, that little notice was taken of the enquiries of schools, and that the interference of the laws and of the priesthood but rarely interrupted the speculations of the philosopher.

The result might have been favourable to scholastic knowledge, but was of no advantage to the cause of religion. They who discovered the wild and mischievous absurdities of a system of twenty thousand gods, were led by their enquiries to mythological abstractions, at once useless, sophistical, and obscure. Theories were multiplied, but the predominant creed remained the same. Every sect had its peculiar tenets, but the tenets were heard only within the schools in which they had been engendered, or, if they extended further, were too dark or absurd to be intelligible or useful to the

people. There was much conflict, little certainty, ceaseless discord, no victory, rare conviction; and the more orthodox sophist who pretended to reverence the polytheism of his country, contributed as little to popular edification, as he who exchanged the credulity of superstition for the yet more flagrant credulity of the atheist, and impiously surrendered the world to the blind dominion of necessity or of chance.

It is, indeed, a fact which will scarcely admit of dispute, that the Greeks, in proportion as they advanced in politeness and erudition, became more corrupt and superstitious in their creed. They were so little satisfied with the number of the gods created by the fancy, or borrowed by the plagiarism, of their poets, that they were at all times ready to admit into the calendar of their pantheon the adopted divinities of the surrounding nations. Syria and Egypt, accordingly, augmented the celestial catalogue of the polytheist of Athens, of Sparta, and of Rome; and this infusion of foreign extravagance into the established religion of Greece, contributed to heighten the vices of the popular faith. There was no philosopher bold enough to oppose the progress of the torrent. The error and the mischief were sanctioned, instead of being repressed, by the laws. The Areopagus of Athens, the Ephori of Sparta, and a long list of statesmen and legislators, extending from an early period, to the age of the *philosophic* Julian, and the sage and imperial Antoninus, were equally zealous to lend their authority to the idols of their temples, and to perpetuate the creed by which the popular mind was darkened and misled. The people, in whom the light of nature

had been almost extinguished *, were consigned, apparently, to hopeless and irremediable ignorance; and it is not wonderful, under such a constitution of things, that the most absurd and mischievous persuasions on all the topics of religion, and the most ludicrous yet pernicious forms of idolatrous worship, should continue to prevail in, otherwise, the most civilized and gifted regions of the globe.

The priesthood, which should have endeavoured to instruct this ignorance, was either unable or unwilling to interpose. The priest, himself, was often as deeply tainted with the superstition of the times as the vulgar crowd; and the system to which he was attached, was rather to be sustained by his influence than impeached by his wisdom. But the interests of his office co-operated with the prejudices of his faith, to render him still more effectually the friend and the supporter of the established order of things. In proportion to the credulity of the people, he was to be revered and obeyed. The foundation of his authority was laid in the holy credulity of the multitude. He could not suffer a god to be displaced from his pedestal, a rite, however barbarous, to be omitted or reformed, or a customary sacrifice to the most contemptible of his deities to be withheld, without danger to the existence of his sacerdotal power. He was, therefore, by every effort of priestly policy, to preserve the fabric of superstition from alteration or decay; and this purpose was to be accomplished but by confirming the idolatry of the popular faith, and by strengthening those chains of religious slavery, which, for so many ages of consecrated ignorance,

* Tuscul. Disput. lib. iii. c. 1.

had been imposed on the understanding or the simplicity of the people.

This design of the priest had nothing to apprehend from the interference of the philosopher. The philosopher was heard only within the walls of his school, and his scepticism was as harmless, as his systems, generally, were extravagant and incomprehensible. The theories, therefore, which he framed, left untouched the altar, the statue, the temple, and the oblation. The prescriptive belief of the multitude remained unquestioned and undisturbed; and the national veneration continued to embrace a mythology which had been framed or adopted in times of anarchy and confusion, and of which the deities were often as contradictory in their passions and their views, as they were execrable in their licentiousness and their crimes.

Under this system the inferior orders of men were considered, not as worthy of instruction, but as demanding the restraints of religious despotism. Could the gross multitude, it was indignantly asked, be rendered holy and good by philosophy and by reason? Could the violence of their passions be governed by the cold precepts of scholastic wisdom, or the refined arguments of scholastic subtilty? Could a religion reach their hearts, which rejected the thunders of Jupiter, the ægis of Minerva, the trident of Neptune, the snakes of the Furies, or the ivy-bound spears of the grape-loving Bacchus?—The philosopher, the legislator, and the priest, agreed in the answer; and the admitted incapacity of the mass of men for better institutions, was considered as a justification of the superstitious ignorance to which they had been prescriptively and contemptuously assigned*.

* Strabo. lib. i. p. 36.

The whole of this superstition was well calculated to accomplish the purpose for which it seems to have been framed. Designed, not to enlighten, but to govern and to occupy, the crowd, it abounds with solemn rites and licentious observances; the first inspiring the votary with awe, the last engaging and conciliating him by pleasure, and neither of them instructing or elevating his heart. Sometimes the shrines were to be covered with fruits and flowers, and the prayer was to ascend to deities of laughter and of frolic; and splendid festivals, and joyous ceremonies, intermingled with the allurements of dance and song, of beauty and of love, were to kindle and to gratify the passions of the worshipper, and not rarely to terminate in scenes of debauch too gross to be described *. But, when the more terrific gods were to be appeased, and the people were to be impressed with superstitious fears, a machinery wholly different was employed. The altars were stained with blood; hecatombs were slain; midnight sacrifices were offered in the gloom and retirement of the cavern; the victim of desecration †, which, like the scape-goat of the Jews, was to bear the sins of the nation, was driven forth to perish under a public curse; and human oblations were to excite and attest the fanaticism of terror. In a religion of such a structure we can discern little but the extravagancies of a wild and undisciplined fancy, or the artifices of a corrupt and corrupting policy. The passions of men were appealed to, not their reason. All was delusion, and the delusion was embraced as essen-

* Strabo. lib. viii. p. 581; lib. xii. p. 837.

† A man, or a woman, and sometimes both, as the emergency of circumstances required.

tial and indisputable truth. The progress of science and philosophy had not the slightest influence on a creed which was nothing more than a system of falsehood and contradiction; and the very people, who looked down upon the rest of mankind as devoted and irreclaimable barbarians, retained, at their proudest period, a religion not less gross nor less pernicious than that of the most ignorant and savage nations.

Under these circumstances, where was the poor man to look for instruction! The philosopher himself admitted, that, in this world of darkness, he could discover nothing but phantoms and shades; that the most common of all things were utterly beyond his comprehension, and that his best judgment was, in the highest degree, fallible and frail*. This admission, as far as it referred to religious topics, we know to be true; and it may enable us to judge what must have been the comparative darkness in which the inferior classes of the people were involved. They had no teachers but teachers of error. They had no religion but a religion of fraud and fallacy. They had no priesthood inclined to free them from the chains of superstition in which they grovelled. They had no disposition to question the authority of their creed, or to pass beyond the narrow circle assigned to their understanding by a corrupt and implicit faith. What was the result history has informed us. They worshipped any thing, and every thing. At one moment they laughed at their gods, at the next adored them. The vices of their Olympus were brought upon the stage for their sport, but the objects of their merriment continued to be suppli-

* Plato. *Repub.* lib. vii. In *Init.* Aristot. *Metaphys.* lib. vii. c. 1. Marc. Antonin. lib. v. 10.

cated by their devotion and their fear *. As citizens they were brave, gallant, patriotic, and free. As disciples of a creed, they were abject, ignorant, superstitious, and enslaved.

In the Eleusinian mysteries, perhaps, something better might have been learned. From those sacred and mystic rites all who were touched with sin, and who yet yielded to the influence of mortal passions, were ordered to depart. In the progress of his probation, the disciple was rendered docile to the impressions of wisdom and the voice of his teachers, by every artifice which pomp, illusion, and solemnity, could supply. He was confined within the recesses of a deep and ample cave. Miraculous sounds vibrated in his ears, and portentous visions flitted before his eyes; and self-moving tripods, and the hiss of serpents, and the tremblings of the earth, and thunders and lightnings, which perpetually shook and gleamed through the cavern, conspired to prostrate his spirit in amazement and awe. When, by these and similar means, his purification was completed, the priests proceeded to fulfil the final duties of their sublime office. The votary was now to be cheered and elevated by brighter illusions. His eyes, instead of being repelled by objects of horror, were feasted with scenes of verdure and flowers. Celestial splendor descended upon him. He was solaced and soothed by the airy dance, and the sounding lyre; and dulcet symphonies, and inspiring hymns, prepared his spirit for the admission of high and heavenly truths. Then it was that the volume of wisdom was opened for his edification. He heard or read of things di-

* The instances will be found in the preceding Chapters III. and IV. sect. 1.

rectly opposed to whatever his fancy had hitherto conceived, or his understanding had embraced; and, instructed in the being and unity of God, the nature of the human soul, a future state of punishment or reward, the maxims of moral truth, and the foundations of social obligation, he was at length dismissed to occupy his proper station in life, and to realize the salutary lessons which he had received, in the virtues of the good man and the useful citizen*.

But the lofty description of these mysteries, in which the antient writers have indulged, seems to have been little merited. The initiated did not appear to surpass the rest of men in sound and practical wisdom, nor did they contribute, by the lights which they had received, to remove or diminish the ignorance of the public mind. Beyond the mysterious cavern, nothing was heard. The lips of the illuminated were prudently sealed by a fearful and inviolable oath†. The mass of the people was unworthy of the divine edification. The same ludicrous or pernicious tenets were retained; and, whatever might have been the acquirements of the initiated few, the many continued immersed in the same darkness of unpitied and neglected ignorance.

To remedy, in some degree, this deficiency of

* Appendix, Note C. C. C.

† Horace adverts to the crime of indiscreet or unfaithful disclosure.

Est et fideli tuta silentio

Mercēs. Vetabo, qui Cereris sacrum

Vulgarit arcanæ, sub iisdem

Solvat phaselum. Carm. lib. iii. ode 2.

See also Sueton. Octav. August. lib. ii. c. 93; and Livy, lib. xxxi.

public instruction, the civil obligations of men were often impressed and enforced by the wisdom of the legislator. While the cause of virtue was to derive such feeble support from the prevailing superstition, the love of public order and public good was promoted by salutary institutions. Wise and sententious maxims were written on the walls of the temples, and around the altars; and inscriptions, every where multiplied, of which some recorded the praise of genius*, or the glorious achievements of patriotic valour, others immortalised the infamy of the criminal and his crimes, and others afforded the most sublime and salutary maxims for the regulation of life, contributed, without doubt, to diffuse the knowledge of public and private obligation†. Yet, allowing these modes of popular education their full effect, we cannot affirm that they were sufficient to remedy the deficiency of religious instruction. Innumerable were the duties which they could not reach, and the vices which they could not restrain; and, as they were accompanied by no adequate sanction, and afforded no motive sufficiently powerful to reach and cleanse the secret impurities of the heart, they were proportionally imperfect in operation and effect, and not only too much circumscribed for the due instruction of public or individual ignorance, but

* One of these inscriptions was eminently beautiful. "The name of Euripides requires not to be preserved by a tomb or an epitaph. All Greece is the monument of his glory." Antholog. lib. iii. p. 273.

† Plat. In Alcibiad. vol. ii. pp. 124, 129. In Charmi. vol. ii. p. 169. Xenophon. Memorab. lib. iv. 769. Pausan. lib. x. Anthol. Græc. lib. iii. p. 273.

too feeble for the effectual restraint of public or individual depravity.

The Grecian religion, then, instead of providing for the education of the inferior classes of men, contributed effectually to perpetuate the errors of their creed and of their faith. The legislator and the priest were equally to uphold the superstition of the altar; and, if the scheme of religion which they announced was, indeed, planned for the purposes of political and priestly influence, and that only, they were eminently successful in the whole, and in every part of their scheme.

SECT. II.

Unvarying ignorance of the Hindu populace—The Braminical order alone instructed—Priestly contempt of the inferior classes, and priestly theory of the unalterable incapability of the vulgar castes—The Vedas never to be exposed to profane eyes—Inquiry menaced and repressed—Error and delusion perpetuated—The religious and intellectual state of the people.

THE attachment of the Hindu, in antient and in modern times, to the rites and tenets of his religion, has been uniformly zealous and implicitly faithful. The very wildness and extravagance of his creed have only rendered him more ardent and bigoted in his faith. Tales more puerile than those of demons and genii, and ordinances more grievous than the most despotic laws, have been insufficient to impair the fervor of his idolatry; and the monstrous system which excited the unbounded reverence of the votary three thousand years ago, is still em-

braced with undiminished ardor, and unhesitating credulity.

Length of time, occasional intercourse with other nations, scholastic inquiry, or philosophic doubt, might have been expected to produce some variation in this ready and submissive faith. But time has found nothing mutable in the altar of the Bramin, and revolution, which is so perpetually destroying the noblest of the works of man, has left unimpaired the extravagant structure of Indian superstition. The Hindu of the present day is, accordingly, but the transcript of the Hindu of former ages, not merely in his civil, but in his religious capacity. He adheres to his gods with unaltered, and, it would seem, unalterable, reverence; and he sings the wanton hymns of devotional joy, or performs the execrable rites of a sanguinary superstition, with the same persuasion which distinguished the most holy of his forefathers, and which would consider it as impious, to question the perfection of the deities whom he worships and serves.

Of this inflexibility of creed, this unconquerable tenaciousness of faith, this pious ignorance, which have preserved their sameness with so much consistency, and through so many ages of civil and political mutation and decay, one cause may be found in the jealous disposition which perpetually watches over the institution of the castes. The people, properly so called, are confined within a circle from which they are prohibited to pass. Their faculties are exercised by no adequate cause. They must remain through life in the same class, and move in the track which had been trodden by the footsteps of their fathers. There is, therefore, no hope of progression,

and, by consequence, no inducement to inquiry. The objects and occupations of men never vary, and the limited pursuit limits improvement by limiting capacity. The political tyranny by which the Hindu is thus confined to the narrow distinctions of his caste, contributes effectually to mould and degrade his moral and religious, as well as his civil, character. He looks above him, not to learn, but to obey; below him, not to exercise his benevolence, but indulge his contempt; and to his own class, not with the hope and ambition which aspire to the distinctions of high attainment, but with the temper of the slave who is chained to a spot by the irresistible restrictions of unvarying law. He has, therefore, no movement, unless he retrograde, by some act of religious disobedience, to an inferior order; and he submits himself without effort or reluctance to the subservience in which he was born, because he has nothing higher to expect, and nothing better to obtain.

But, exclusive of these regulations, which can neither be evaded nor transgressed with impunity, the faith and ignorance of the Hindu are perpetuated by other causes equally powerful in their tendency. In no country have precautions been adopted so anxiously as in India, to restrict the progress of religious inquiry. The people are not merely governed by the political institutions which oppress them. Every attempt to enlarge their knowledge, and particularly to enlighten them on the great topics of their creed, is expressly and rigidly prohibited. If the Sooder, whose caste includes the great mass of the population, should presume to read a portion, however insignificant, of the sacred books of the priesthood, he would instantly be punished as a dar-

ing and impious malefactor; and, if he proceeded further, and committed the passage to memory, he would become liable to the last punishment of the law, and be put to death, to terrify others from the vileness of such a transgression. But it is not the Sooder alone who is to be held in religious bondage. Even the higher classes must aspire only to the knowledge which the priest may think it proper to communicate; and all are equally to look up for instruction to the ministers of religion, with the same servile and implicit reverence of fear and awe. The system was artfully framed for the purposes which it was intended to produce. Darkness has been every where diffused. Not a passage has been left open for escape into light; and the Hindu has borne ample testimony to the success of priestly craft, by the fanaticism with which, for so many ages, he has continued to embrace the monstrous follies and pernicious extravagancies of his creed*.

The priesthood of India derive not their authority merely from law. They are clothed in peculiar sanctity. Truth and wisdom abide exclusively in their order; and they alone possess the means of conciliating the favour, and averting the vengeance, of the gods. By these high distinctions, which owe their existence to the ignorance and the superstition of the multitude, the ascendancy of the priests has been confirmed over the minds of men. Whatever knowledge, accordingly, the ministers of religion may possess, their obvious interest forbids them to disclose; and they are sufficiently anxious to preserve

* See Code of Gentoo Laws, ch. xxi. § 7. Orme's Frag. p. 102. Sonnar. vol. i. p. 194.

their power by the same means from which they derived it. But, while they labour to subdue and to darken the mind of the people, they also are prepared with the same theory of justification which the philosophic contempt of the profane vulgar avowed in Greece. "Why," they ask, "should we endeavour to diffuse better principles among the populace? The laborious multitude have no right to truth, because they are unwilling or unable to receive it. By the condition of this order they are set apart for the endurance of poverty and toil, and not for the acquisition and distinctions of knowledge. Incapable of reasoning justly, or of regulating their passions by any sober and abstract principle of philosophy, it becomes necessary to restrain them by delusions adapted to the state and temper of their minds; and the promises and penances of superstition are alone to operate on the irremediable grossness and inferiority of their nature. Appropriate fictions are proposed to children to please or to affright, to encourage or to deter them. What are the multitude but children in understanding, though adults in passion? and, if it would be impossible to govern them by the sublime precepts of pure religion, nothing remains but that their guides resort to the influence of holy prejudices and fictions, and frame for them a system of fear and hope, better adapted to their credulity and ignorance, and more likely to reach their conduct and their will."—On these grounds the priest endeavours to vindicate that abuse of his functions, which is to be traced only to the selfishness of his order. He thinks, or pretends to think, that his duty requires him to close every path that leads to

knowledge and to truth. The Vedas are withdrawn. A scheme of religious deceit is carried on with practical dexterity. The vulgar eye, which cannot bear the brightness of the sun, is to see only through the twilight of a confirmed and a gloomy superstition; and, in a country which has made so considerable a progress in elegant arts and useful science, it has been contrived to retain the multitude in a state of unvarying darkness, on every topic of religion which is important and essential to human edification*.

This darkness, under the present constitution of things, appears to be inaccessible to light. On every side the institutions of the Hindu confine and restrict his efforts and his views; and the creed which has produced, is to be now defended by, his ignorance. One leading truth impressed upon his mind might endanger the whole structure of his religion. If he were taught to entertain a single notion of what should be the temper and spirit of a genuine priesthood, would he so readily allow himself to be governed by the despotism of men whom he sees every moment employed in some indecent ceremony, or some execrable sacrifice? If he were instructed in a single attribute of the Divine Nature, would he with such implicit reverence bow down before the idols of wantonness, of cruelty, and of wrath? His religion, therefore, shuns and interdicts inquiry, and the interdict is confirmed by his fears. He is loaded with the chains of a barbarous tyranny. His mind is subdued. He learns to distrust the competence of

* Holwel. Hist. Relat. part ii. c. 4. Sketches of the Hist. &c. of the Hindus, p. 113. Orme's Hist. Hindost. vol. i. p. 4. Code of Gentoo Laws, ch. xxi.

his own understanding, and the efficacy of his own piety ; and, in the same degree, to trust to the wisdom and sanctity of the priest. The law, for which he dare not have recourse to the sacred authority of the Vedas, he is to receive, by an unfaithful and sparing transmission, from the lips of his teachers ; and he yields up his reason and his will to the direction of men whose interests are involved in his submission, and who know that the first moment of his freedom shall be the last of their authority.

SECT. III.

Religious instruction afforded to the disciples of Mahomet—The Koran open and addressed to all—Its precepts principally designed to kindle the fanaticism of the warlike Mussulman—In its figurative and elaborate style less adapted to the comprehension of the poor and ignorant—The design of the whole composition to further the purposes of the individual, not to edify a nation—No priesthood for popular instruction—The prophet might have preached—The practice discontinued—The people uninstructed in sound and salutary truths.

THE prophet of Mecca rejected, or had not occasion to exercise, the policy, with which the religion of the Greek and of the Hindu withheld instruction from the inferior classes of mankind. He maintained no peculiar tenets for the learned or for the ignorant. His followers were to be equally initiated in the precepts and doctrines which he derived from the communication of the celestial Gabriel. Whatever, therefore, was the wisdom of the Koran, it was attainable by all; and the poor equally with the rich were permitted to approach the sources of religious edification.

It may not appear that the inferior disciple was encouraged by any especial invitation, to quench his thirst at the stream of this new dispensation; and no voice of tenderness and compassion may have been raised to soothe him in the darkness of poverty and of sorrow. But he was not consigned to ignorance, nor shut out from truth. He was permitted to consult "the sacred book." The wisdom which descended from heaven for the edification of those above him, was also to tender instruction to his ignorance; and the precepts and doctrines of his law, are an inhe-

ritance, from the benefits of which nothing remains to exclude him but his own heedlessness and want of faith.

Yet, though the poor may read and may learn, they are not to benefit alike by their study of the Koran. The lessons which are addressed to the meek, the humble, and the peaceful Mussulman, are comparatively rare and feeble, and less calculated to encourage him in his tranquil career of sober and unostentatious virtue. It is for those only among the poor who fight under the standard of Islam, and contribute to bring in the compulsory proselyte to the church of the prophet, that the Koran reserves its especial illumination. They are perpetually addressed in the language of approbation, of encouragement, of counsel, and of hope. The duty which requires them to go forth with the armies of the faith, and to shed their blood, if necessary, in the subjection or extermination of the infidel, is ceaselessly and anxiously announced. They are told with prophetic fervor of the recompence which awaits the soldiers of God, and shall repay the massacres of the sword; and it is for them especially that the missioned Gabriel brought down the precepts of heaven, and for them that the final fruits of divine acceptance are particularly reserved.

Mahomet seems to have been as little disposed to adapt the general structure of his language to the comprehension, as his precepts to the edification, of the poor. His style is sometimes figurative and sublime, often parabolical and obscure. He adopts all the pomp and garniture of eloquence, and employs all the modulation of tuneful periods, to captivate the more accomplished portion of his hearers; and he so perfectly effected this purpose of vanity

or ambition, that many of his opponents attributed his success to the fascination of witchcraft *. But the unlettered poor require something more for their instruction than magnificence of phrase. They will be little benefited by the address which is not conveyed in terms of affectionate simplicity, and little influenced by the precept which is not clothed in the unaffected and unostentatious language of kindness and of truth. There may be metaphor, and allusion, and imagery, but they must be obvious or familiar to the understanding of men. There may be tales and parables, but they must be capable of an easy explanation, and be admitted only to elucidate and impress some useful and wholesome doctrine. The last and best of the prophets did not govern himself in his office of public teacher by these homely and simple rules. He uttered no voice of kindly and benevolent wisdom ; felt no charitable and generous anxiety for the religious improvement of the multitude ; and, if there was belief, it was that of fanaticism kindled by the high tone and alluring promises of the impostor, and sustained by a succession of victories over the heathen, which seemed to attest the favour and interposition of heaven.

The author of the Koran, indeed, had but one object, the gratification of his ambition, by the subjugation of the minds of men. He was not to reflect the lights which, as he said, had descended on him from above, by any rule but his own interest. It was his business to proselyte, not to instruct ; to seduce the multitude to his standard, not to lead them to virtue ; to conciliate the support of the rich and poor, rather than edify either. In framing his

* Kor. ch. xv. xxi.

religion he was guided only by these views. Truth was compromised, and falsehood employed, as circumstance or policy required. The Jew, the Christian, and the idolater, were soothed by the occasional adoption of their respective tenets; and the established customs and usages of the people, many of them corrupt, and many absurd, were prudently interwoven in the texture of the Koran*. While the prejudices and errors of all were thus consulted and gratified; and fable, and fallacy, and fraud, and wisdom, were to mingle in every page of "the inspired book;" the doctrine of proselytism and of persecution was gradually announced, and the valour of the faithful was set in array against the obstinacy of the infidel†. The structure was thus completed for the purposes of imposture and ambition; but no provision was made for the instruction of the humble and the poor in piety and in virtue; and we recognise in the legislator of Arabia, not the self-subduing and self-denying sage, who was to become the guide of the meek and lowly of the earth, but the bold and fortunate schemer, who, as far as force and artifice could avail, was to render every thing subservient to the establishment of his power.

* Sale expressly admits that the doctrine of fasts, ablution, pilgrimage, and polygamy, was adopted by Mahomet, because he found it already established among the Arabians and other people of the East. The same author asserts, that several superstitious rites and ceremonies of the Arabs were sanctioned by the Koran; and that the great principle of the Unity of God, so frequently repeated by the Apostle, was not a new tenet, but one borrowed from the people. Sale. Prelim. Disc. sect. ii. p. 53; sect. i. p. 19.

† Mahomet did not hazard this doctrine in its fullest extent, till he had sufficiently established his influence and power. It is announced, without any limitation, in the twenty-second chapter of the Koran.

It does not appear that any particular means were adopted by this extraordinary man, for explaining to the multitude the law of the Koran. Some might be fortunate enough to hear an incidental Sura from the lips, or to be occasionally edified by the preaching, of the prophet; and they might be softened and soothed by the sorrow of the complaining trunk, and the sympathizing pity which redressed its wrongs*. But these holy instructions and affecting occurrences were confined to the temples of Mecca or of Medina; and the wandering clan was to be classed among the tribes, without benefiting by the light, of the new religion. No teacher was appointed to go forth to town or village, and reclaim the guilty, and instruct the ignorant. If there were any mission, it was to coerce the obstinate or pillage the refractory; or, if the law were promulgated to the more distant proselyte, we have reason to conclude that it was announced to stimulate his ferocity, and not to repress and discipline his passions†. What was thus sown in violence was reaped by the sword. During the life of Mahomet, all Arabia was vexed and harassed by an incessant and desolating crusade against the devoted idolater. The æra of his power was that of pillage, confusion, and massacre; and his victories were only so many triumphs over humanity and justice. In succeeding times the caliph imitated with holy fervour the prophet whom he revered. The thirst for infidel blood was amply indulged; and a war, interminable for centuries, continued to devastate the nations which presumed to reject the haughty alternative of tribute or of conversion. In the mean time there was no priestly interposition to

* Appendix, Note W. W.

† Appendix, Note X. X.

mitigate the evils which persecution was inflicting on the world. The priest found in his religion no injunction to arrest the progress of this sacred warfare, but many injunctions to accelerate the sanguinary progress of his creed; and the Mussulman, while he was impressed, perhaps, with the necessity of stated prayer, and burdensome ceremonies, became in morals a persecutor, and in piety a fanatic, with no brotherhood at his heart but that which bound him to his sect, and with little mercy but that which was either to exterminate the tribes of the heathen, or compel them to accept the proffered salvation of the Koran.

SECT. IV.

The people condemned to ignorance as well by modern philosophers as by priests—The contempt of the populace the same, the motive different—Character of Christ—His instruction tendered to all, but more especially to the poor and ignorant—No compromise with the mighty, no rejection of the humble—The manner of his teaching adapted to the comprehension and feelings of the multitude—With what effect—His disciples—The condescension with which he mingled with the poor—Delighted to reveal to “babes and sucklings,” what had been hidden from the prudent and the wise—His sermon on the mount—The heart and affections of the populace conciliated by the meek but earnest benevolence with which he announced his doctrines—Of all the legislators which have ever pretended to instruct mankind, he alone deserving of the title of the friend, the guide, and the instructor of the poor.

WE have seen how little attention was paid to the moral and devotional education of the poor by the legislator of the Koran, and with what neglect or contempt the inferior classes of the Hindus and the Greeks were consigned to religious ignorance. If we extend our view to the institutions of other

nations, we shall discover the same heedlessness of popular edification. The magi of the Persians, the priests of the Egyptians, the druids of the Gauls, equally maintained two systems of doctrine, one comparatively pure and wise, the other degraded by the most barbarous superstition. The first of these was disclosed only to the few who had been regularly disciplined for the mysterious communication, and had pledged themselves by the solemnity of an oath, never to divulge the holy dogmas in which they might be instructed. In this disclosure the utmost caution was preserved to prevent the unhallowed intrusion of the profane. The most retired places, the caverns of the rocks, the depths of the forests, the chasms of the mountains, were the theatres of this awful and mystic tuition; and scarcely an instance occurred, in several ages, of the slightest violation of the confidence which had been reposed in the fidelity of the initiated. The other system was publicly taught. It was designed to impress the populace with superstitious terrors, and to produce the most implicit dependence on the priest. Menaces, fables, ceremonies, and rites, all calculated to intimidate and dismay the multitude, were artfully and successfully employed by the ministers of the temples. Nothing better, it was affirmed, would have been intelligible to the blindness and credulity of the common mind; and, in perfect consistency with this opinion, religion was converted by priestly and political fraud into a means of popular ignorance, depression, and subjugation*.

* Cæsar. de Bell. Gall. lib. vi. c. 16. Strabo, lib. iv. Euseb. de Laude Constant. lib. i. c. 7. Lactant. lib. i. c. 21. Cluver. Germ. Antiq. lib. i. c. 3. Diog. Laert. In Proem.

Many modern philosophers have adopted the same principle of one doctrine for the wise, and another for the ignorant. The illuminated fraternity, disdaining to address themselves to the inferior orders of mankind, dedicate their labours to the more erudite classes of sceptics and infidels. They produce their tracts of elaborate or witty perversion, for the purpose of acquiring distinction among their compeers; and they make war, with philosophic intrepidity, against the common sense of the rest of the world, and against the institutions and religions which the rest of the world admit and revere. And what is their justification? That precisely of the Braminical priest, and the Grecian sophist. The great Hierophant of the sect does not conceal it. Pretending to universal benevolence, and elevating his voice against bigotry and persecution, he looks down upon the benighted condition of the poor with unfeeling contempt, and affirms, with oracular dignity, that the populace are incapable of comprehending the doctrines of truth, and "do not merit a reasonable religion*."

In these tenets there is little truth, little philosophy, little humanity, and abundant presumption. The great object of religion should be to reach and enlighten the ignorant. It is not to confine its wisdom to individuals or schools, but to tender it as the common property of all, and especially of those who most require it. If the scholar and the sage

* "Que la populace ne merite une religion raisonnable." *Essai sur l'Histoire Generale*, tom. i. pp. 33. 34. It is thus the "humané," the "generous," and the "enlightened," Voltaire arrays himself, with contemptuous flippancy, against the great mass of his fellow-creatures, and would leave them for ever to wallow in the superstitions and prejudices with which he charges them.

alone be permitted to visit the interior of the temple, where the guiding doctrines are to be promulgated, and the sacred mysteries revealed; and if the multitude is to be denounced as a vulgar herd, incapable of comprehending truth, or unworthy to receive it*, religion becomes proportionally useless or pernicious; and an impassable obstruction is opposed to the progress of social life, or to the improvement of private, in manners, morals, and civilization. True knowledge is rectitude as well as power, and sound principles of practical and devotional wisdom are generally simple, and easily to be understood. As such knowledge and such principles are diffused, society is strengthened and improved, and human happiness is purified and advanced. Why they should be withheld from the many, and lavished on the few, let the philosopher explain. Every good and benevolent man will exult to see them spreading from the palace to the hut, and despise the theory on which a Shaftesbury, a Diderot, or a Voltaire, would refuse them to the craving necessity of the multitude.

When Christ came to legislate for mankind, he did not assume the garb of the sophist or the philosopher. His philosophy was to consist only in simplicity and truth. It was to be one of the marks of his mission, that he preached good tidings to the meek and poor†; and the inspired writers of the Old

* The polite and elegant Shaftesbury, as he was called, speaks of the "vulgar," that is the people, with utter contempt; and he evidently thought it a disgrace to disclose his knowledge to any but "men of fashion and breeding." Brown on Shaftesbury, 401. He was worthy of the school, and the school of him.

† Isaiah xxix. 18, 19; lxi. 1.

Testament recognised him, from afar, as the righteous teacher of the lowly and humble. The ancient prophets had a different character to sustain. They were commissioned to rebuke kings and princes ; to alarm and awaken their nation by predictions of wrath, and threatenings of punishment ; to denounce, with holy indignation, the witchcraft of idolatry, which had so often seduced the credulity of the people ; and, rapt into future times by the spirit of God, to disclose the visions which they had beheld to the astonished Israelite, and to reclaim an obdurate and erring race, by revealing the views with which they themselves had been favoured of the intentions and economy of God. Their language, therefore, is impassioned and lofty, and full of the most sublime and awful allusions ; and, whatever be their moral wisdom as teachers of the poor, it is perpetually mingled with menaces and denunciations of divine displeasure, and with solemn warnings of things to come. But Christ was to adopt a tone more simple, and to communicate doctrines less remote or obscure. He found, at the commencement of his ministry, that the Scribes and Pharisees had buried the Jewish Scriptures beneath a mass of visionary glosses and unintelligible commentaries ; that, however they had condescended to address the rich, they had contemptuously taken the key of knowledge from the poor ; that they considered the multitude as " accursed," for the very ignorance of the law which they themselves had occasioned by their fanciful reveries and vain traditions ; and that the inferior classes of the people were consigned, without pity and without instruction, to the sorrows or corruptions which generally accompany a life of

poverty and toil*. Under these circumstances, he was not, like other teachers, to leave the sheep to wander abroad as having no shepherd. He had compassion on the multitude, and took them under his protection, and shared with them the miseries of their condition, and pitied the ignorance to which they had been condemned. With this temper he prosecuted to the end the labours of his ministry; and they who had been, hitherto, insulted by neglect and contempt, were enlightened by his wisdom, as they were embraced by his charity.

His counsels, indeed, were not limited to a class. He announced no partial precept, and exercised no partial favour. But to the prejudices and vices of the proud he addressed himself in the tone and language of a master, and with the uncompromising energy of true and fearless wisdom. The doctors of the Jews, instead of being flattered by his indulgence, were offended by his admonitions; and the prescriptive and obstinate prejudices of the Sanhedrim were openly and faithfully exposed and condemned. Not many noble, and not many mighty were, therefore, at first, conciliated or called†. Their pride expected adulation and found rebuke, their vices compromise, and experienced reprehension. But he who feared not the lofty and the powerful, delighted to walk with the oppressed and with the poor. When he addressed them, it was with a tenderness and compassion which evinced his

* Grotius on Matt. xi. 5. Luke ix. 52. John vii. 48, 49. Luke xi. 52. The passages here quoted are strong but just denunciations of the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, and are equally indicative of the compassionate consideration extended by the Gospel to the poor.

† First Epist. to Corinth. i. 26.

anxiety for their welfare and instruction. He descended to their low estate with the affection of a friend, admirably adapted his language to their understanding, impressed his maxims with the most artless but happy simplicity, and availed himself of every incident which occurred in their presence, to bring home some good precept to their heart. His images were often drawn from the most familiar objects, as his exhortations often arose out of the most common occasions. Did he instruct them to discern the false prophet from the true? "Behold," said he, "the tree is known by its fruit *." Did he design to distinguish the doers of his word from the hearers only? "Behold the house built by the wise " man upon the rock, and the rains came and the " winds blew upon that house, and it fell not; but " when the winds blew upon the house of the foolish " man, it fell, because it was founded on the sand, " and great was the fall thereof †." Did he teach the people from the ship?—"Behold my kingdom is " as a net which was cast into the sea, and gathered " of every kind; and when it was full they drew it " to land, and collected the good into vessels, but " cast the bad away ‡." Did the Samaritan woman supply him with water from the fount? "Lo! who- " soever shall drink of this water shall thirst again; " but whosoever drinks of the water which I shall " give him, shall never thirst, and it shall be in him " as a well of water springing up into everlasting " life. ||"

In his whole intercourse with the people he thus condescended, familiarly and affectionately, to elu-

* Matt. vii. 17.

† Matt. vii. 24, 25, 26, 27.

‡ Matt. xiii. 36.

|| John iii. 19.

cidate and to impress his precepts. If he walked abroad with them from Jerusalem, the blade of grass, the flower of the field, the fowls of the air, afforded him some beautiful allusion for their edification*. They were delighted with parables, and he told them of the wedding supper, the prodigal son, the sleeping virgins, and the woman who had found the piece of silver which she had lost. They were rigid and literal in their attachment to their sabbaths and their rites; and he appealed to their feelings and understanding, by an interrogatory which, though immediately addressed to the Scribes and Pharisees, was also intended for the instruction of the rest of his auditors.—“Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath day, or to do evil, to save life or to kill? What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit, on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold of it and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day†.”

In these popular elucidations, he was often, in the highest degree, pathetic and eloquent; but his eloquence was that of simplicity and truth, which, while it might have instructed the philosopher of the schools, was intelligible, in every word, to the understanding of the illiterate multitude. He affected nothing mysterious, he held no secret doctrine, he revealed every thing without reserve, and rendered every thing intelligible, which was necessary to the moral and religious improvement of the most ignorant

* Matt. vi. 26, 30.

† Mark iii. 4; Matt. 11, 12. He held many discourses on the observance of the Sabbath, and all tended to correct the same error of unyielding formality. Luke xiii. 15, 16; John iv. 5.

of his auditory. On the highest and on the lowest topics he equally adapted his language to the comprehension of the people. If he spoke to them of God, of Providence, of heaven, of hell, of human responsibility, and of a judgment to come, he displayed the same unaffected singleness of wisdom with which he had addressed them on the most incidental subject*. Accordingly, he was heard with reverence and with conviction. Every where the multitude flocked around him; and, while the pride and prejudice of the Rabbi rejected his doctrine, because he came not with power, the humble and the poor listened to him with docility, because he came to them as their teacher and their friend.

I have said he did not avert himself from the rich and great, though he entered into no compromise with their vices, and admonished them without reserve on the danger of their condition†. It was the object of his mission to correct error wherever it was found, and to conduct all, if possible, in the way of life. But his abiding spirit rested with the children of poverty and of humility. Among them, he not only sowed the good seed which was so soon to spring up and bear fruit an hundred fold, but selected the disciples, "the foolish things of the world," by whom he was to "confound the wise, and to subdue the mighty‡." He made it repeatedly a ground of

* Christ, it has been justly observed, was always master of his doctrine, and always proclaimed it with tranquil simplicity. It cost him no effort to unfold the most sublime truths. He speaks of the kingdom and glory of heaven as of his Father's house, and the grandeur which astonishes men, is natural to him. Fenelon, *Dialogues sur l'éloquence*.

† "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."

‡ First Epist. to Corinth. i. 67.

thanksgiving to God, that they had listened to the voice of the Shepherd, and been conducted to the fold. He did not disdain their humble festival or their homely hearths. He entered their dwellings with the gracious condescension of a friend *; and, on these occasions of affectionate familiarity, he omitted no opportunity of inculcating the precepts of righteousness and of truth, and of encouraging the practice of virtue by the promise of recompence.

Every where he maintained the same character of companion, teacher, and friend of the poor. He could reprove the vain ignorance of the Scribes and Pharisees, drive the money-changers with indignation from the temple of God, and condemn the hypocrites who sounded a trumpet before them, in the synagogues and in the streets, that they might have glory of men.† But with what exulting charity does he rejoice in being the instrument of revealing unto babes that which had been hidden from the prudent and the wise‡! With what pathetic tenderness, and patient wisdom, does he address the multitude, who flocked with reverence “to hear the “gracious words which fell from his lips!” And, after he had impressed them with the most perfect precepts for the regulation of their conduct towards God and man, how beautifully does he advert to the fears and anxieties which their poverty might produce, and instruct them to elevate their confidence to the protecting goodness of the Almighty! “Behold the fowls of the air, for they “sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into “barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them:

* Matt. ix. 10. Luke vii. 3, 6; xi. 37; xix. 5.

† Matt. vi. 2. ‡ Matt. xi. 25.

“ are ye not much better than they? And why take
“ ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of
“ the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do
“ they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solo-
“ mon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of
“ these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of
“ the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast
“ into the oven, shall he not much rather clothe
“ you, O ye of little faith*?”

When we look to the high character which he sometimes assumed, we are more affected by this graciousness of his demeanour to the poor. He occasionally put on a majesty and a dignity which astonished and confounded his enemies. He was greater than Solomon; he could command legions of angels; he was the giver of life to whom he pleased; he was the Son of God, who was one day to sit on his glorious throne, and to judge the world in righteousness and truth. Nothing appeared to be concealed from his knowledge, nothing was beyond the reach of his power. He searched, at one moment, and laid open, the secret recesses of the heart; at another, he revealed the distant events of future times, announced the promise of immortality, asserted a co-equality with the Father, and held forth the keys of life and death. But, when he mingled as a teacher of righteousness among the people, how did he throw aside the garb of majesty, and clothe himself in the beauty of meekness, condescension and humility! With what a spirit of conciliating tenderness did this august and pre-eminent Personage address himself to his auditory, and what indulgence did he extend to their occasional heedlessness and incre-

* Matt. vi. 26, 30.

dulity! He lifted not up his voice in the streets. He quenched not the smoking flax. He broke not the bruised reed. He rejected not the little ones who were brought unto him. He communicated with the lowest of his hearers as with friends and brethren, and he cheered the weary and heavy laden, with an exuberant and paternal affection. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Every man that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that abaseth himself shall be exalted. Blessed are the poor in spirit. I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. If I wash not your feet, how shall ye learn to wash one another's feet!" In this manner he preached, and exemplified, humility and good will. What was the result? He laid the foundations of his law in the hearts of the multitude. Many of those who, under other religions, would have been considered as unworthy of instruction, or occupied, for priestly or political purpose, in vicious ceremonies, were associated in the number of his faithful and enlightened followers, and adopted into his church to become heirs of his glory. The picture is new as it is affecting and interesting; and we delight to see such majesty and dignity, softening, on due occasions, into the meekness of condescension and love, and pronouncing the blessing, and conferring the wisdom; of God, on the poor and lowly of the earth.

That wisdom was foolishness to the Jew, and a stumbling-block to the Greek; to the Jew, who was devoted to his talmuds and his rituals, and taught to prefer the letter to the spirit of his law; to the Greek, who was fascinated by the extravagant systems of the schools, and disciplined for the conflicts of

sophistical eloquence. It was not for such persons to admire and follow the teacher who uttered the language of simplicity and truth, who addressed himself to the heart, and whose audience were the poor. That which they despised, he preferred. The "foolishness" which they thought below their cunning, was to be his recommendation; and, while they delighted to indulge in the reveries of mysticism, or to dazzle and confound by the artifices of rhetoric, he chose to adapt his lessons to the rudeness of an ignorant auditory, and to infuse his simple but sublime precepts into the bosom of the multitude.

Thus did Christ. The prediction of the prophet, and his own declaration, were fulfilled*. The hitherto outcast poor were enlightened and evangelized. After a long period of darkness, the day-star arose which was to shed its beams on the lowest and humblest of mankind. Philosophers addressed themselves to the learned and great. Priests were busied with their traditions and forms. Legislators were occupied with political regulations. But Christ, including all mankind, devoted his especial regard to the spiritual wants of the forlorn and desolate. Well, therefore, might it be said of him that he strengthened the feeble knees, and healed the infirmities of the diseased; that he opened the spring in the parched and thirsty soil, and bade the myrtle-tree and the rose to spring up in the desert†.

Even now he may be said to abide with the poor, as in the days of his mission. His spirit yet breathes in the pages of the Gospel, and the language in which he addressed himself to the multitude of Jerusalem is still heard. The most humble and

* Matt. xi. 5. Luke vii. 21. † Isaiah.

rant of men may yet be instructed by his voice
his life, and the precept which once descended
he heart of the favoured Jew, continue to be
ered to the children of lowliness and of ob-
ity. It is the express character of the wisdom
h he taught, that he who runs may read and
erstand it, that it is milk for babes, that it is
ht to lighten the darkness of the world, and that
a common legacy to all times and to all people,
he common information of men in all the essen-
doctrines of piety and of virtue. If, therefore,
humble and sober inquirer seek here for edifica-
he will find it; and, according as he continues
earch in the simplicity of a meek and candid
it, he shall discover new cause for gratitude to
teacher of men, who alone, of all the legislators
e earth, has merited the title of the friend, the
le, and the instructor of the poor.

CHAPTER IX.

DOMESTIC AND FEMALE MANNERS.

SECT. I.

Manners permitted or sanctioned by the Greek and Roman mythology—Early manners of the Greeks—Inferior condition of the female sex—Coarseness and rudeness of intercourse—At a subsequent period women more humiliated and depressed—Their education—Seclusion before and after marriage—Drudges in their household—Guarded with suspicion and jealousy—No intimacy beyond the walls of their dwelling—Public officers appointed to superintend their conduct—The reign of courtezans—The matron and the wife openly deserted—The increasing rigour of the laws—Emblems of female slavery publicly displayed—Women of Sparta—No maternal property in the child—Female exercises—The open robes—The naked dance—Exposition of children—Domestic tyranny—Facility of divorce—Final depravity of manners—Picture by Juvenal—Effects on the stage and on general literature—Instances—Sallust—Horace—Euripides—Plautus—Terence—Aristophanes—Martial.

NOTHING is more important to the welfare and refinement of social and private life, than to ascertain the respective duties, in the union of marriage, of the two sexes. Both are gifted with the same moral and intellectual faculties, and both possess rights founded in nature, and, therefore, not to be violated without injustice. The wife and mother, indeed, are to be exercised in a train of engagements very different from those by which the father and the husband are to be occupied. The last, more capable of toil and effort, are to labour for the immediate and future provision of their families, and often to encounter, in doing so, difficulties not to be subdued but by many and patient struggles. The

former are to bring children into the world, to watch over their infancy, to protect their early helplessness, to nourish them at their bosom, and to be, consequently, more confined within the narrow circle of domestic life. Under these distinctions, laws are to be made for the regulation of the sexes. The respective rank which the husband and wife are to hold ; the distinctive obligations which they are to fulfil in the economy of the household ; the pretensions of each to the rights of property ; and the punishments to be inflicted on each for crimes injurious to the other ; may reasonably demand the consideration of the lawgiver. But the law is to be just to nature and to reason. They whom reason and nature pronounce to be equally entitled to the privileges of humanity, and to protection from wrong, are not to be governed by partial and unequal ordinances. To sanction, by civil regulation, the tyranny of the husband, and the slavery of the wife, would be to injure both ; the first, by encouraging the domination of evil and despotic passions, the last, by degrading her to a state of humiliation and dependence ; a domination and dependence utterly at variance with that open confidence and that generous affection, on which must depend the happiness of married life, and which cannot exist, in any case, between the tyrant and the slave. How far these rules have been the guide of the legislator we are now to inquire. The subject may lead to details of a less delicate character ; but from a partial investigation we could only deduce a partial inference, and what might be gained in refinement would be lost in utility and in truth.

If we commence our view at an early period of Greece, when manners were unsettled and uncivi-

lized, and war and pillage were almost the perpetual occupations of the brave, we shall easily trace sufficient evidence of the degradation of the female sex. Men might be governed by the laws, but subjection to man was the lot of woman. There was no reciprocity of duty, no mutuality of generous and connecting sentiment, no co-equality of right, no common obedience, to regulate the intercourse of wife and husband. Domestic union was impaired and corrupted by the unjust division of privilege and of authority; and the highest birth, and the most gentle virtues, did not secure the beauty, the delicacy, or the feebleness of woman from the rude and unfeeling despotism of command, nor from the toils and occupations of menial and of servile life.

The "chaste" Penelope seems to have enjoyed little authority as a queen or as a wife, and to have been considered as the economist and steward only of her husband's property*. She is perpetually engaged with her distaff among her maids. An upper chamber of her palace is allotted to her, where, with less exposure to intrusion, she may pursue her task, and, with less temptation to idleness, she may urge, by example and precept, the diligence of her attendants. After she had resisted for twenty years the artifices of her suitors, and demonstrated, with rare fidelity, an unyielding and undivided affection for her husband, her prudence and love were yet doubted by his incredulity, and he replied to her

* When she orders the bath and oil for Ulysses, yet unknown, she boasts of the surpassing economy of her household. The manners of her court were not very reserved. She was present when one of her attendants administered the bath to the still undiscovered Ulysses, and chafed his feet and legs with oil. *Odyss.* lib. xii. *Odyss.* lib. xix.

anxious inquiries by an artful fiction*. The conduct of her son was yet more insulting. When she was about to deliver the bow to the strange beggar, who had conciliated her charity, Telemachus interferes with no filial respect; and, coarsely reminding her that he alone possessed authority in Ithaca, commanded her to retire to her apartment, and there, exercising the proper duty of a female, to ply her spindle and her loom, and enforce the industry of her maidens †.

Females of the highest rank were to be occupied with duties yet more repulsive; and the poet, in assigning their offices, has testified the low opinion which, in his time, was entertained of the sex. By the hands of the most distinguished ladies, the steeds of their warlike husbands were sometimes fed, and sometimes supplied with strengthening and refreshing 'drinks ‡; and a princess might proceed, with the sullied garments of her family, to the river; and, having joined with her nymphs in laving the clothes in the "pure wave," and in spreading them to dry on the "pebbled beach," conclude her toils by

* Ulysses, in the garb of a beggar, was, after some delay, permitted to discourse with her. She pathetically lamented the absence or death of her husband, discovered her reverence and affection for him by frequent tears, enumerated with admiration his exalted virtues, and unequivocally betrayed the tenderness of a faithful wife. Ulysses still preserved his coolness and his craft, and withheld his confidence. *Odyss. lib. xix.*

† The queen obeys with submissive humility, and without answering a word. *Odyss. xxi.* When Penelope, after she had been informed of the return of her husband, and his triumph over the suitors, approaches him in silence, as if yet doubtful of his identity, Telemachus again most irreverently upbraids her, and accuses her of a negligence unworthy of a wife. You possess a heart, he adds, as little susceptible as a stone. *Odyss. lib. xxiii.*

‡ *Iliad. lib. viii. v. 185.*

neatly folding up the cleansed apparel, and returning with them in a sumpter-carriage, to enjoy the delights of her "resplendent palace*."

If there be a scene of mutual tenderness in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, it is that in which Hector meets Andromecha for the last time. Yet, even where the poet has exercised his best powers, and employed his softest colours, we discover little of the delicacy of genuine affection. The interview is distinguished by an incident of inexpressible beauty †. But it is short and hasty. The husband speedily reminds Andromecha of her duty, and she instantly obeys. "Retire," says he, "to your chamber. It is the woman's province to exercise the distaff, to spin and weave, and be vigilant in the regulation of her servants."

The great bard, who describes the manners of his heroes with so much energy and vivacity, has almost universally painted his female characters in the rudest colours. The captive widow follows the warrior, who was still reeking with the blood of her husband or her children, as cheerfully as if she was quite contented with the melancholy servitude of her new hymæneals. The loftiest dames in the palaces of Troy scarcely depart from their chamber, or desist from their work. The wool is spun with unreluctant labour by the fairest hands. And no dignity of station secures the sex from gross and offensive

* The garments with which the princess in the *Odyssey* proceeded to the river were pretty numerous. Exclusive of her own robes, and those of her train, the sumpter-car was loaded with various articles of the royal wardrobe, and with the apparel of five brethren, "who were desirous, when they danced, to wear new-bleached garments." *Odys. lib. vi. 74—81.*

† The young child retiring to its mother's bosom, from the nodding plume.

rebuke, or from commands to be as readily obeyed as they are authoritatively given.

Even the goddesses of the poet are unfeminine and indelicate. They reproach each other in language of grossness and of insult; and Juno merits to be suspended, in mid sky, by her offended husband, with heavy anvils fastened to her feet, that all heaven might witness her punishment and her shame. In these delineations we discover only the rough and rude features of savage life. But the poet was just to what he saw; and, in the virtues and vices of his deities, we detect the homely coarseness of the age in which he lived.

In subsequent and more civilized periods, the sex experienced as little respect in Greece, as they had found in the heroic age. Neither religion nor law exercised any favourable influence on domestic manners; and restriction, and jealousy, and contempt, mingled with, and disturbed, the most important and engaging connexions of life. Beauty and virtue, which would have improved and embellished the forms of society, and have softened and refined the temper and habits of men, were generally immured in distant and solitary apartments, and occupied in the drudgery of domestic stewardship. Prior to marriage, the daughter was carefully secluded from the world in the dull retirement of the gymnocæum, and subjected to restraints which contributed, at once, to retard or prevent the progress of her faculties, and to teach her how to submit and to obey*. After marriage, the ceremonies of which

* In the dialogue, of Socrates and Icomachus, for which we are indebted to Xenophon, it appears that the unmarried girl was watched, with the utmost vigilance; instructed in little more

were, in some instances, singularly indecorous*, the whole duty of household management was imposed upon her fidelity and care; and she who had been denied the necessary instruction of a liberal and an early education, was to be regarded, at last, but as the prudent and patient guardian of her husband's property, and scarcely to be diverted from the drudgery of superintendence, even by the company of her nearest relatives†. At the same time she was to experience neither the delicacy nor the confidence which might have recompensed her assiduity; but, on the contrary, was to be subject to a suspicion and a jealousy which argued, and issued from, an insulting doubt of her fidelity and her virtue. If she were permitted to leave her house, the prudent circumspection of the laws surrounded her with a number of precautions, offensive to her pride, and

than to make a vest, and attend the female servants at their tasks; impressed with the necessity of silence and reserve; and expected to restrain her eyes and her tongue on every occasion, and to see, and hear, and interrogate, as little as possible.

* I am not permitted to enumerate them here, and may only allude to the *ἐπιθαλαμία* and the *πεννία* at the door of the bride chamber, and the singular office of the *Θυγαῖρος*, the bridegroom's friend.

† In the dialogue of Xenophon, to which I have lately referred, a husband, immediately after his marriage, recapitulates, for the edification of his wife, the services and duties which she is required to fulfil. She must remain at home; send the servants, whose occupation is in the fields, in due time to their work; preside over those whose labours are confined to the house; economize whatever provision is brought in; distribute whatever is necessary for daily use; preserve the surplus for future occasion; see that the wool is spun, and turned to account; inspect the quality of the grain supplied for the family maintenance; attend, not only to the conduct and diligence of the slaves, but to their infirmities and sickness; and be at the head of all culinary concerns,

humiliating to her principles*. She might not indulge in the most innocent freedom. Every irregularity in her conduct, however trivial, was regarded and condemned as an unpardonable breach of female decorum. Chastity and delicacy, she was told, equally forbade her to converse with a stranger†; and to form an intimacy beyond the walls of her own dwelling was yet more criminal, “because,” says the historian, “it might lead her to an embezzlement of the goods and chattels committed to her charge.” Under such a system all intercourse was restricted with unrelenting jealousy. The female chamber was converted into a prison, and effectually

from the pans and pottery that are employed, to the preparation and service of the different meals. If it be recollected that the establishment of a wealthy Athenian included a great number of slaves, and that, consequently, there must have been always some, and frequently many among them, afflicted with disease, it will be admitted that, in this department alone, the most determined housewife might find enough to do.

* It was enacted by Solon, that married women should not leave home, on any visit, with more than three garments; that they should never appear abroad but in full dress; and that they should not travel by night without a lighted torch before their chariot. Even the quantity of provisions which they might bring with them was limited to the value of an obolus. The breach of these, and of other ordinances of restriction, was punishable by a mulct; and the mulct, which was levied by officers aptly denominated *γυναιχοποῖ* and *γυναιόμοι*, was publicly recorded in the Cere-machus, in order to expose the offenders to general reprobation. Athenæ. lib. iv. c. 9. Hesych. Voce *πλάταρος*.

† Cornel. Nep. Præfat. In Vita Excel. Imperat. Stobæus Sermo. lxxii. He quotes a passage from Menander, which directly affirms that no married woman should pass beyond the threshold of her own door. See also Iphigen. In Aulid. v. 738. Euripid. Phœniss. v. 88. et Andromach. 876. Phidias expressed the necessity of domestic retirement in women, by a Venus treading on a tortoise, which carried its house upon its back.

defended from suspicious intrusion by bolts and bars *. And the married woman, the victim of a jealous and suspecting tyranny, was considered by her husband as little more than an instrument of profit, an household drudge whose best duty was retirement, and whose brightest virtue was domestic economy.

What was denied to the legitimate claims of the daughter and the wife, was lavishly yielded to the bold and impure demands of the avowed courtesan. Religion nourished in her very bosom a brood of female profligates, who, uniting accomplishment to beauty, diffused voluptuousness under the sanction of celestial authority, and corrupted the ingenuity, and polluted the morals, of youth. In every state of Greece, women, equally unchaste, were permitted or encouraged to exercise their deplorable profession; and at Corinth, as well as elsewhere, temples were erected to the earthly Venus, in which impurity was stimulated by superstition, and the most licentious of the sex were consistently honoured as the priestesses of the most licentious of goddesses. The indulgence of sensuality was thus legitimated as worship, and the oblation of impurity was but an act of devotion to the divine "Parent of the pleasures and the loves." Under these circumstances of encouragement, for the reserve, the delicacy, and the decorum which render woman so lovely in the eye of reason and of taste, and which supply the place, and heighten the charms of beauty itself, were substituted the meretricious arts, and ready blandishments, and skilful seductions,

† Aristoph. *Thermophor.* v. 414, 417. Aristophanes may be considered as the historian of the manners of the times in which he lived; and the manners required such an historian.

of the wanton and accomplished courtesan; and the courtesan, unintimidated and unrepelled, was to mingle in society often without shame and without disgrace, and often with admiration and applause.*

Who did not associate, if permitted, with the beautiful and fascinating but dissolute Aspasia? At the very moment when her example and influence were most pernicious, she could count amongst her open admirers the proudest and noblest characters of Athens. Pericles, the ruler, and Socrates, the moralist, of the first city in Greece, were not ashamed to be seen in her society; and, unreservedly applauding the irresistible graces of her form, they seemed to think it an honour to be admitted to the intimacy of her friendship. Her house, though the avowed residence of females of her own character, was visited not only by philosophers, but even by distinguished matrons, who were smitten with admiration of her superior wisdom†. While the wife and mother were consigned to retirement, to ignorance, and to restraint, she was to enjoy the advantages and the pleasures of freedom and of society‡. She would have dis-

* Women of this character were selected for the service of the earthly Venus, and were sometimes supposed to procure public blessings by the favour of the goddess. They are said secretly to have co-operated, as priestesses of the divinity, with the political views of Themistocles and Miltiades; and the victories obtained by the skill and valour of those heroic commanders, were enhanced in the public opinion, by being attributed to the intercessions of meretricious agents with a meretricious deity. *Athenæ. Deipnôst. lib. iii.*

† Plutarch. In Vit. Pericl. The fact may elucidate the moral delicacy of the times.

‡ She lived much in the society of Pericles, and is supposed to have composed for him that beautiful oration, which Thucydides

dained the lot of the married woman; and her form was embellished by the arts of dress, and the graces of manner were successfully studied, for the purposes of evil triumph and profitable seduction. To these accomplishments she added the more effectual fascinations of taste, of eloquence, and of wit; and, thus arrayed by nature and education, she exhibited the most perfect contrast to the dame, who, herself almost a chattel, was respected or regarded by her husband but in proportion to her skill in the management of his household.* Yet, whatever were the seductions of Aspasia, the caste to which she belonged, and which was numerous, might exhibit several rivals not unworthy to compete with her beauty and acquirements. The poet found abundant themes for his most ardent and amatory songs; and females were easily to be procured from whom the painter and the

has recorded and extolled, in honour of those who had fallen in the last Peloponnesian war. The speech concludes with a passage which may afford an additional evidence of the temper and manners of the age. The mothers and wives of those who had been slain were permitted to be present at the delivery of the oration. But their sorrows appear not to have been much respected by the orator, and they are dismissed at last in the coldest and most repulsive language. "For you," says Pericles, "you will not, I trust, be worse than nature made you. You will recollect that your duty is retirement, and that your greatest honour is to be neither talked of nor known beyond the society of your own household."

* Demosthenes, In Orat. pro Neæra, dwells with little delicacy on the popular distinction between the courtesan and the wife. "By our wives," says he, "we become the fathers of legitimate children, and we possess in them faithful guardians of our house and property. But the courtesan is essential to our enjoyment of life," &c.

statuary might have copied, without the aid of imagination, the form and features of naked beauty.*

In proportion as this latitude of principle and of practice was indulged in Greece, the respectable portion of the sex were degraded more and more by the jealous tyranny of legal vigilance and restraint. They became literally the appendages of the family inheritance, and were held in a state of rude and perpetual tutelage. If they were deprived of their husbands by death, the authority which he had exercised was transferred to her son; if the son died, the controul was exercised by the next of kin; and this superintendence, whether of the son or of the next of kin, was maintained, there is reason to think, with a roughness and rigour† which implied the insulting suspicion which was entertained of the frailty of the sex.

Every thing, indeed, was contrived to remind the sex of the duties of their servitude. The letter of the law, and the authority of the husband, were insufficient, it was thought, for their direction and restraint. They were also to be instructed, by emblems publicly displayed and of an expressive character; and the bird of night, a pair of reins, and a bandage for the lips, impressed them with the humiliating lesson that they were expected to watch over their husband's property with the vigilance of the owl, to place upon their tongue the restraint of silence, and to guide their menials with the dexterity of a charioteer at the public games.

* Appendix, Note D. D. D.

† *Ne sis mihi patruus oro*, was a frequent supplication of the widow to her guardian. The guardian was denominated *χρησιος*, an emphatic term.

The happiness of domestic life was, in fact, considered, in Greece, as of little moment. The state was every thing ; the wife, but as she gave robust citizens to the state, was nothing. In Sparta she might seek, without shame or dishonour, to remedy an unfruitful union, by a temporary departure from her husband ; and her husband might not only transfer her, for the same reason, and against her inclination, as freely as he might lend a tripod or a vase, but invite into his house the auxiliary husband whom he was to impose on the obedient acceptance of his wife*. If she bore a sickly child, her maternal feelings were to be outraged ; and the infant, because likely to become a burden to the public, was to be cast into a cavern to perish†. If her child proved to be healthy and robust, it was considered as the property of the state, and unfeelingly removed from the superintendence of her fondness and her care‡. In her earlier days she had been regarded only as an instrument of political advantage. She was required to mingle in the public exercises of wrestling, of the quoit, and of the race, for the purpose of increasing her stature and her strength ; and, in order to extinguish the weakness of jealousy by which society is so much disturbed, and to provoke young men to marriage, that they might become more serviceable to the commonwealth, she was taught to exhibit herself without reserve in the naked dance, and, at all times, to robe her person in a manner that might best disclose the beauty and symmetry of her limbs||. After her

* Plutarch. In Lycurg.

† Id. ib.

‡ Id. ib.

|| Plutarch. In Lycurg. expatiates on these exercises with evident pleasure ; and that they produced the intended effect is pro-

marriage she was to be no less instrumental to public purposes. Her value was to be estimated by the addition which she made to the sound and robust population of the state; and, on this principle, the right of her husband to her exclusive fidelity, was to be measured only by the political rule of public benefit.

At Athens and at Rome many of these degrading institutions were adopted or extolled. It has been already observed that the profound and accomplished Plato approved of the community of women, of the naked dance, and of the exposure of children*; and Pericles, devoted to the charms of Aspasia, is said not only to have repudiated his wife, but to have transferred her to another. The Roman rivalled the Greek in these flagrant violations of decorum and of justice. The grave and formal moralist, the dignified senator, the distinguished statesman, they who were

bable. The lady Lampito, in the play of Aristophanes, is extolled by her associates for her various merits; but it is mentioned as her chief glory, that she possessed strength and vigour enough to fell a bull. Aristoph. *Lysistrat.*

The sage of Cheronæa is as much pleased with the naked dance, and the managed robe, as with the exercises imposed on the Spartan girls; and he admits, that the indecent drama was represented in the presence of the whole public, and that the young men joined in the dance with an equal contempt of the incumbrances of dress. He does not tell us that the young women were to escape the taint of the licentiousness they inspired.

In modern times, philosophic inquirers, as they are called, have repeated and approved of the sentiments of Plutarch. "*Dans le gymnase, les jeunes filles, depouillées de leurs habits, et parées de leur vertu, comme le plus honorable des vetemens, disputèrent le prix des exercices aux jeunes garçons leurs emules.*" *L'Analyse De Repub. de Plat. par L'Abbe Barthelemi. Bibliotheque de l'homme public, par Condorcet, vol. iii.*

* Chapter vi. sect i.

the judges, and they who were the makers, of the laws, admitted and practised the Spartan doctrine, by which the husband was authorized to dispose of the person of the wife *. The unfortunate matron was sometimes to be consigned, without divorce, to the temporary possession of her husband's friend, and to be again received by her wedded master, only to be again exposed to the same indignity. With similar barbarity her child was to be exposed, whenever the prudence or parsimony of the father should incline him to prevent the increase of his family, and, what was yet more execrable, she might be commanded and compelled by her legal tyrant, to become herself the murderer, on its birth, of her unoffending infant †.

This subjection of the sex was maintained by various provisions of the laws; and they who were left without restraint by their religion, were surrendered to the vigilant superintendence not only of their husbands but of the state. Where love, says

* Hortensius the orator, after having supplicated the permission of Cato to cohabit with his daughter Porcia, then the wife of an illustrious senator, and found that the fastidiousness of the husband was likely to throw some difficulty in his way, proceeded, with inimitable coolness, to solicit his philosophic friend to confer on him the temporary possession of his wife Marcia. To this modest proposal there was, of course, no objection to be made. Not only Cato consented, but the father of Marcia deemed the proposal quite reasonable; and the happy orator received from their hands the object of his fugitive passion. *Plut. In Vit. Caton.* See also *Grot. De Verit. Christian. lib. ii. § 13.* Bayle talks of lending a wife, and of lending a book, as equally permitted by the law of nature and reason. *Nouvelles Lettr. Contr. Maimbourg, Lett. 17.*

† See chap. vi. sect. i.

Montesquieu, appeared solely in a shape which displayed the profligacy of the times, and marriage itself was considered as nothing more than a union of convenience, dissoluble at will *, it might have been thought more necessary to guard the chastity by political regulation, which was not defended by higher sanctions. The female, accordingly, who, in a seraglio, would have been attended by slaves, flexible, perhaps, to a bribe, was in Greece to submit to the yet more rigorous inspection of magistrates appointed by the state. These men were invested with an authority scarcely inferior to that of the tribunal which was early established at Rome †; and they might punish the wife, not merely for the deeper crime of incontinence, but for every departure, however slight, from that reserved and punctilious gravity which she was required to maintain. She was thus to live in a state of perpetual and unworthy coercion, while her husband might transfer his love, without blame, to the seductive charms of the more fortunate courtesan. All her virtues were prescribed or compelled. She was to boast no merit of voluntary performance; and if the jealousy and despotism which drew around her so tyrannically the circle of suspicion, might sometimes provoke the crime which

* L'Esprit De Loix, lib. vii. c. 9.

† This tribunal took cognizance of the manners as well as of the guilt of women. It was invested with ample powers to punish every deviation from the grave and retiring modesty required of the sex; and the punishment, as it was discretionary, might be readily adapted to the nature of the crime, or the indiscretion of the accused. When this tribunal did not act, the husband himself sat as judge, and pronounced the verdict on the frailty or indecorum of his wife, in the presence of her relations. Dionys. Halicarn. lib. ii. p. 96. Ulpian. Tit. vi. § 9, 12, 13. Livy, lib. xxxix.

they were vigilant to prevent, the vengeance due to the honour of the injured husband was amply sanctioned by the laws, and was seldom either remitted or delayed.

It is true, that women might exercise, on certain occasions, the privilege of divorce, and thereby escape from the restraint or the tyranny to which they had been subjected by marriage. Yet, even this law, seemingly favourable to the rights and interests of the sex, was impeded or enfeebled in its operation by the injustice of the public voice. The wife was scarcely permitted to detail the crime of her husband on which she was to ground her pretensions to redress; the impeachment was heard, if at all, with evident reluctance and contempt; and the coldness or frown of the disapproving magistrate was prepared to intimidate the unfeminine audacity of the complainant. It was considered as scandalous in a woman to depart, under any circumstances, from her husband; and the complaint of Medea, of the hard fate of her sex, and of the necessity imposed upon them of submitting in silence to cruelty and neglect, might have been equally just in later times*. When the wife of Alcibiades appeared before the proper tribunal, and demanded a separation from her husband, for causes which she was about to state, he seized her arm, in the presence of the assenting and applauding judges, and forcibly

* Euripid. Med. v. 230. The divorce obtained by the wife, and that by the husband, was specified by two different terms. Men were said ἀποτιμᾶν, ἀπολύειν, to *dismiss* their wives; women were said ἀπολείπειν, to depart from their husbands. The dignity of man might inflict, but was not to suffer the degradation of dismissal; and the contumacy which announced the inferiority of the sex, was to be added to the other evils imposed upon them.

conducted her to his home *. This detail, however, by no means completes the catalogue of wrongs to which women were subject in Greece and Italy. According to the grave and deliberate sentence of Cato Major, if a husband detected the adultery of his wife, he might secretly put her to death without subjecting himself to the hazard of punishment; but the wife was to respect the adulterous husband too much to disclose, even by the slightest intimation, the contumacy and the desertion of which she had reason to complain †. Or, if she were permitted to detail the evidences of his guilt, her accusation was to be confined within a narrow circle. She herself was liable to the charge and the penalty of adultery, for every act of incontinence; but her husband, indulged with ample and profligate liberty, might safely and freely associate with the most corrupt of the sex; and, in the age of courtezans, an intercourse with a married woman alone rendered him an adulterer, and exposed him to a divorce ‡.

* Plutarch. In Vit. Alcibiad.

† “ In adulterio uxorem tuam si deprehendisses, sine indice impune necares; illa, si adulteraris, digito non auderet contingere.” Aul. Gell. lib. x. c. 13.

‡ This was one of the laws of Solon. By many of the Greek and Latin writers, the libertinism allowed by the laws is not merely tolerated but praised. The censor Cato speaks of it with high approbation, as a privilege sanctioned by necessity and utility:

Quidam notus homo, cum exiret fornice, macte
Virtute esto, inquit, sententia dia Catonis;
Nam simul ac venas inflavit dira lubido,
Huc juvenes æquum est descendere.

Hor. Sat. lib. i. Sat. ii. 31.

The husband, therefore, had little to apprehend from any appeal of his wife to the protection and justice of the laws. But it was not enough to countenance and justify his domestic despotism by law, and to enable him to transfer his wife, as he pleased, to the temporary possession of a friend. He was also to be endowed with an authority extending beyond the grave. She who had lived in subjection to him during his life, was to be obedient to whatever disposition he might make of her person by his will. The expiring husband might supply a successor to his connubial rights by the capricious or arbitrary election of his last moments; and even a slave might be thus legally selected to occupy the bed, as well as to enjoy the property, of his departed master*.

The law of divorce, though of little avail to the wife, served only to afford a libertine licence to the husband. There was here no limit but will to his power. The most innocent was as liable as the most guilty wife, to the shame and misery of a sudden dismissal. In a moment the whole fabric of domestic felicity might be dashed down. The endearment of one

Cicero affirms that this licence, instead of being offensive to morals, was perfectly consistent with the ancient customs and constitutions of the state. "*Quando enim hoc factum non est? Quando reprehensum? Quando non permissum? Quando denique fait, ut quod licet non liceret.*" Orat. Pro Cœl. c. 29.

Husbands at Athens associated so rarely with their wives, that it became necessary, in the opinion of the legislator, to prescribe the attentions which domestic duty required.

* The father of Demosthenes bequeathed his wife to a future husband; and Demosthenes himself justifies the will by which the slave Phormio was put in possession of the property and wife of his deceased master. Orat. In Aphob.

hour might be succeeded by the alienation of another, and alienation might indulge its caprice without limitation or reserve. A new smile exciting a new passion, a contemptible whim, a fancied offence, might be fatal to the peace of an entire household; and the tranquillity of families, built upon a foundation of sand, was every moment in danger of being overthrown. This facility of divorce extended itself from the highest to the lowest stations, and influences all the morals and manners of life. We are perpetually disgusted with the authenticated details of vile and wanton, or cruel and remorseless repudiation. We see Cicero, the author of the most moral treatise of antiquity, dismissing his wife Terentia, without a crime, after he had lived with her for thirty years.* We see Marcus Brutus, the stoic, separating himself from Claudia without remorse, though her fidelity was not to be impeached†. We see the Patrician Dolabella parting with one

* He had an apology. She did not, in his opinion, grieve sufficiently for the death of her daughter Tullia; and hence, though she entreated, in the most submissive manner, to be permitted to see him, he sent her a divorce. *Cicer. Epist. ad Attic. epist. 13, 32, 34, 47.* But he did not remain long unmarried. The young *Publilia* soon supplied the place of the more aged Terentia. *Epist. Familiar. epist. 4, 14.* Nor does Terentia appear much to have lamented her loss. She lived to the age of one hundred and three years; and Cicero was succeeded by three husbands, whose blandishments may have consoled her for the cruelty of the orator. The last of her husbands was consul in the reign of Tiberius; and it was his boast, that he possessed two things which had belonged to the greatest men of the age before him—Cicero's wife and Cæsar's chair. *Valer. Max. 8, 13. Plin. Hist. Nat. 7, 48. Dion. Cass. p. 612.*

† Brutus fell in love with Portia. That was enough. *Cicer. Lett. ad Attic. 13, 9, &c.*

wife that he might take another, who had liberated herself from her second husband by divorce, probably for the purpose of this new marriage *. And the catalogue may be aptly closed with Pompey, the boast at one time of his country, who divorced himself from his wife Antistia, under circumstances of the vilest ingratitude, that he might consult his interest or his passion by marrying a woman who was then living with her husband †. Of these enormities of practice, sanctioned by this convenience of law, the details might be easily enlarged ; but enough has appeared to prove with what facility men of the first rank, and sometimes of the highest character, availed themselves of the powers of divorce ; and how little the cruel indifference was condemned with which the most innocent wife was dismissed by him in whom she should have found the love, the protection, and the guardianship of a husband.

Under laws so vile and so corrupt, marriage became, not a union of felicity, but an institution to be violated at will by caprice or crime ; and it was soon found that the tolerated vices of one sex were, at length, abundantly to provoke the vices of another. The tales told by the historian, of the infamies which derived their aliment from such a system, and pervaded society, are scarcely credible. The most sensual of the passions was indulged with a profligacy which openly laughed at purity of manners,

* Cicer. Epist. Famil. 2, 15. Ad Attic. 6, 7.

† The father of Antistia was put to death on account of his attachment to Pompey. The mother, shocked by the disgrace of her daughter, destroyed herself. Plut. In Pomp. Middleton, Life of Cicero, vol. ii. 45. The lady who was to be honoured by this new espousal was Livia, the daughter of Cicero.

and with a fury which no shame could modify or limit. Marriage was regarded by both sexes with undisguised aversion; and, however it might be contracted from interest or from convenience, was seldom considered as a restraint *. Women learned to vie with men in their applications for divorce, and there were some who computed their years of womanhood, not by the number of consuls, but of husbands †. The Epigram of Martial, and the Satire of Juvenal, were pointed against this spreading plague, with a just and ardent indignation; but the arrow was sped in vain ‡. The hardihood of vice was obdurate and invulnerable. The slightest disgust, the least obstruction to her passions or follies, the wantonness of change, the levity and libertinism of a moment, were quite sufficient to avert the wife from the husband, and to induce her to recur to the easy remedy of repudiation. Accordingly, there

* Valer. Max. lib. vi. c. 3.

† Non consulum numero, sed maritorum annos suos computant.
Serr. de Benefic. lib. iii. c. 16.

‡ Julia lex populis, ex quo, Faustine, renata est;
Atque intrare domos jussa pudicitia est:
Aut minus, aut certe non plus tricesima lux est,
Et nubit decimo jam Thelesina viro.
Quæ nubit toties, non nubit; adultera lege est.
Offendor mœcha simpliciore minus.

Mart. Epigram. lib. vi. 7.

Juvenal is more indignant:

Jamque eadem summis pariter minimisque libido,
Nec melior pedibus silicem quæ conterit atrum,
Quam quæ longorum vehitur service Syrorum.

Sat. vi. line 348.

The whole Satire is a fierce but most indecent invective on the reigning vices of the sex. The poet suffers his language to be tainted by the impurity of his subject.

never was an age or country in which so profligate a contempt of the nuptial band, or so much licence and infidelity were displayed, as, at this time, were openly indulged by both sexes at Rome; and it might have been thought by a just observer of that period, that the whole order of society, and all the bonds of husband and wife, and parent and child, and all the kindred affinities which flow from those relationships as from their source, were about to be finally subverted and dissolved.

These vices speedily generated others. They who were reproached by the satirist for the unmasqued libertinism by which they disgraced their sex, completed the scandal of their name by a rage for public spectacles of the most execrable and appalling character. They contemplated with savage delight, the sanguinary and inhuman sports of the arena; applauded the blow, with barbarous enthusiasm, by which the favourite gladiator terminated his contest; beheld, unmoved, his brave but less fortunate competitor writhing on the sand in the agonies of death; occasionally themselves engaged with savage fury in these execrable combats; and sometimes retired, amid the plaudits of a vile populace, stained with the blood of their defeated antagonists. In the temper thus displayed there is something almost more hideous than the bold and unabashed impurity in which they indulged; but we are not astonished that they who, women only in name, had sacrificed all the decency and delicacy of the sex, should be prepared for participating with inhuman joy in scenes of barbarity and blood *.

* Endromidas Tyrias, et femineum ceroma
Quis nescit? Vel quis non vidit vulnera pali?
Quem cavat assiduâ sudibus, scutoque lacescit,

Thus were women degraded and vitiated in Greece and Italy, by the conspiring influences of law, of custom, and of popular opinion. They became wives, not to exercise the household charities, the wedded affections, the maternal tendernesses, the beautiful self-devotion, with which the sex seem almost instinctively inclined to lavish themselves on the little circle of the hearth; but to serve and to obey; to become stewards and economists for husbands who rewarded them with neglect; and to give citizens to the state, which degraded and oppressed them by the injustice of its institutions. We, accordingly, recognise in them the mere instruments of private convenience and public service; till, at length, throwing aside the restraints which tyranny had imposed on them, they no longer yielded to men the monopoly of crime. All manners became proportionally tainted. Society was deprived of its best bond of connexion, in being deprived of the essential graces of decency and decorum. The veil of reserve, as in Sparta*, was considered as an absurd or useless incumbrance; and the deformity of vice

Atque omnes implet numeros; dignissima prorsus
 Florali matrona tuba: nisi si quid in illo
 Pectore plus agitat, veræque paratur arenæ.
 Quem prestare potest mulier galeata pudorem
 Quæ fugit a sexu, vires amat? Hæc tamen ipsa,
 Vir nollet fieri.

Juvenal, Sat. vi. l. 245.

The whole Satire is but one continued record of female depravity.

* The young women of Sparta obtained through Greece the coarse but significant appellation of Phenomerides, from the open garments which they wore, as they did that of Andromaneis, from the licentiousness of their manners. Plutarch. Comp. of Lycurgus and Numa.

was doubled by the unblushing audacity and unfeeling insolence with which it was displayed.

The vices of the times were not solely those of the female sex. Men were equally corrupt. The proud attachment to their country, the love of glory, the spirit of high and illustrious achievement, which had once so much embellished their character, had gradually declined. They had no household at their heart, for they had no household affection, little respect for the mother of their children, little of that family attachment which converts home into an altar of peace and love. Politicians, sensualists, lovers of public spectacles, restless or intriguing citizens, they amply indulged in the privileges which they derived from the law of marriage, and private duty was as much forgotten as public virtue. The wife was rather an inmate in the house of her husband, than a partner of his welfare, or a promoter of his happiness. The bill of divorce was a ready instrument of caprice and wantonness. Family ties were dissolvable and dissolved in a moment, for the indulgence of any new and wayward passion. Beauty, fidelity, obedience, might no more avert the shame or calamity of repudiation, than deformity, profligacy, or ill temper. All conjugal virtues might be violated, and were violated, with impunity. There was nothing to stay the torrent, and it rolled on rapidly and widely. Profligacy grew into a fashion. Men of the highest station and name set the example. Wives were conveniently borrowed and lent. The dwelling of the courtesan was the scene of resort. Vices, to which it is painful even to allude, were every where practised without shame or punishment*.

* Cicer. de Nat. Deor. lib. i. c. 28. Seneca, Ep. xcv. *Puerorum infeliciūm greges, agmina exoletorum, per nationes coloresque descripta.*

Neither law, nor reputation, nor religion, interfered ; and that which they should have denounced as the last of crimes, was tolerated or encouraged by the guilt of their silence.

The dramatic genius of Greece caught the contagion. The comic theatre exhibits nothing of that delicacy and elegance, which a mingled and polished society of the sexes might have communicated and diffused. We discover not, on the stage, a single character of a well-bred woman, that is, of one who, to virtue and intelligence, added dignity and refinement of manners. We seek in vain for the delineation of that universal passion whose innumerable varieties of tenderness and of gaiety, of whim and caprice, of sportiveness and fascination, of tears and smiles, it is the delight of modern comedy to exhibit. If females be introduced, it is generally for the purpose of broad satire and coarse burlesque ; but men, business, politics, and ribaldry, principally engross the stage. The scene displays gymnasiums, and senates, and public assemblies, and courts of law, and the collisions of sophists and of philosophers ; and the dialogue is quick, witty, antagonistic, and humorous, and maintained with a freedom and a licence which spared gods as little as it did men. But the graces of life, the conversation measured yet easy, the elegant and polished intercourse, the politeness, delicate even in its retorts, and chaste even in its vivacity, are not to be found in the scenes of the ancient drama. The poet and his auditors were alike ignorant of the courtesies and the felicities of domestic intercourse, and of the refinement of that mingled association, in which the wit and gaiety of the two sexes are indulged with freedom, but restrained by decorum and by reserve. The comic

stage, therefore, whatever might have been its merits, was utterly deficient in those attractions which would have become it best. No veil was thrown over the coarseness of its characters, because that very coarseness was necessary to popular entertainment. The humour is gross but poignant, the wit licentious but caustic, the allusion broad but ludicrous. The worst things are, sometimes, unceremoniously called by their worst names. The meanest of the human appetites or wants, are perpetually brought forward to make sport for the multitude; and a familiar and a vulgar licence, which, among the better classes of modern times, would excite only disgust or contempt, was not merely permitted, but encouraged and enjoyed, by the gay, the versatile, and the accomplished Athenian.

There never was a people who devoted themselves with so much ardor to the comic theatre, as the people of Athens*. They made their escape from the tameness of female society, to laugh at the poignant wit, or the wanton ribaldry, of an Aristophanes. They delighted in the genius which, sometimes elegant and even sublime, could descend for their gratification, to merry and licentious dialogue, to devices of frolic, to coarse example, and to vulgar obloquy and abuse. Some Aristides, accordingly, or some

* There is a singular instance on record. When the account of the signal defeat sustained by Nicias in Sicily was brought to Athens, the people were assembled in the theatre. The intelligence was announced and heard with momentary sorrow. A few tears were shed; but the benches were not deserted for an instant; the play was speedily continued; and the multitude, forgetting the father, brother, or friend, whom they might have lost, gave themselves up again to the gaiety and good humour which the piece was calculated to excite. *Athenæ. lib. ix. 407.*

Socrates, whose renown and virtues had excited their spleen, were exhibited and burlesqued to indulge their levity ; and the authoritative magistrate, and the assuming sophist, were surrendered without mercy to their laughter or their gibes. Feasting and refreshing their gaiety with comic humour, they contrasted the pleasure which they found abroad with the torpid society of the domestic and homespun wife ; and the more respectable part of the female sex, neglected for theatrical exhibitions, or for the gay levity of the courtesan, and confined within the narrow circle of household office, were neither to promote nor to participate the improvement of private or public manners.

The cause which limited the efforts or the attainments of the comic Muse at Athens, diffused its influence through all the more solemn and affecting representations of the theatre. The tragic author seldom thought of introducing the female character for the exemplification of female excellence. His pencil was always dipped in the darkest colours. If he interested the heart, it was not by the delicacy of his sentiment, not by the charm of sweetness, of tenderness, and of generous affection, but by the energy, the boldness, the vigor, and the terror of his delineations. The love which he described can scarcely be considered as the passion of a human being. It was a fearful and irrepressible impulse, a species of insanity, or a blind and ungoverned rage, kindled by the vengeance or malice of the gods, and hurrying on its unhappy and unresisting victims to calamity and to crime. The poet of tragedy, it is true, was not always negligent of female excellence or grace. He might boast, and justly, of his *Alcestis*, his *Iphigenia*, and his *Antigone* ; but he permitted

such characters to occupy as little as possible of the time of his drama, and they are rarely, if ever, sustained with appropriate dignity of sentiment and of manners. It was rather his object to afflict the heart by some spectacle of hideous calamity, or to exhibit, in their agony, the victims of an unpitying and irresistible necessity, or of cruel, malignant, and capricious gods. He exulted in sending forth the Furies, with their torch, their serpents, and their scourge, to punish the passions which celestial influence had inspired, or the omnipotence of the Fates awakened and impelled. Scarcely does he permit his auditor to repose for a moment in scenes of gentle and tender sorrow. No intervals of happiness and hope, no gleam of moral sunshine, no trust in superior powers, relieve the agitated spectator. Fear, and terror, and despair, and madness, and real and unintentional guilt, occupy the stage in all their horrors ; and the chorus itself is perpetually busy in descanting on the impotence of man, on the vanity of his attempt to escape from misery, and on the necessity of surrendering his bark to the storm which he is utterly unable to resist. In these representations the poet displayed sublime and pre-eminent powers ; but he was not a man addressing men for the purposes of humanity. He taught nothing by which life may be sustained and improved, hope and trust established in the bosom, calamity softened or soothed ; and his acquaintance only with the forms and manners of a society from which all that was of the heart, in its more amiable and benevolent character, may be said to have been excluded by custom and the laws, may account for his ignorance of the genuine sources of sensibility and taste, and may have incapacitated him from giving a softer

colouring to his scenes, and a more useful tendency to his morality.

There was another defect, which extended beyond the drama. It has been observed, that “women were not regarded by the ancients as a part of the polite world or of good company; and hence is, perhaps, the reason why the ancients have not left us a single piece of pleasantry that is excellent, unless one may except the banquet of Xenophon, and the dialogues of Lucian*.” But the ancient writers, from the same cause, were as defective in decency, as they were in pleasantry. Would Sallust, if the times had been refined by the admission of females into society, have unnecessarily adopted in one of the most moral passages of his history, a term of unqualified grossness and impurity†? Would the courtly Horace have admitted into a poem intended for general perusal, a line not to be translated into modern language‡? Would Euripides, in his Cyclops, have expatiated through a whole scene on the most disgusting of crimes? Would Plautus, and Terence, and Aristophanes, and Martial, have polluted their pages with the most vulgar and undisguised ribaldry? Would Virgil, so generally decorous and elegant, have squandered his talents on an eclogue as vile in the subject as beautiful in the composition||?—All the nations of modern Europe, it is admitted, have

* Hume. Essay xiv.

† Quicunque impudicus, adulter, ganes, &c. Bell. Catilin. In Prefat.

‡ Nam fuit ante Hellenam, &c.

|| I dare not allude more particularly to the indecent passages, which disgrace the pages and the taste of these distinguished writers; nor am I inclined to quote for my authority what it would be disgusting to read.

been insulted by the unbridled obscenity of some of their writers. But there is this distinction. In modern Europe, grossness is admitted to be gross; and the writer who transgresses the laws of decorum and of decency, and devotes his execrable volume to the effusions of an impure imagination, is rejected and contemned by the common sense and the common feelings of society. Whereas, at Athens and at Rome, impurity was considered neither as an offence nor as a dishonour. It spoke from the stage without reserve. It sullied the conversation or the writings of the most accomplished characters; and it attested an æra in the history of manners, distinguished by apparent contradictions, and at once refined by science and the arts, and disgraced by a licence of modes and language as universal as it was corrupt.

SECT. II.

State of the female sex in India—Polygamy, its extent and results—Women equally secluded before and after marriage—Servility of their obedience—Uneducated—Domestic offices—The duty of the widow—The accomplishments withheld from the better class of females, lavished on the wanton beauty of the dancing girls of the temples—Women, in general, divested of property—In a state of perpetual tutelage—Prohibited from reading the Vedas—Liable to the most capricious divorce—Suspicion and jealousy of the laws—Punishment of female infidelity—Unvarying state of manners in the East.

AS we advance from the West to the East, we shall discover, in the condition of the female sex, still more legible marks of the vile misrule of folly and of despotism. The tyranny of institution appears to extend from the throne to the household. He, who is himself a slave, becomes an oppressor in his turn.

He rules in his dwelling as the Rajah or the Satrap rules in his province ; and the law of marriage, which is every where the humiliation of the woman and the wife, seems to have been dictated but by his pride, his selfishness, his injustice, and his tyranny.

Polygamy, the despot of domestic life, prevails over the whole Eastern world. With equal contempt of nature, of justice, of public and private welfare, one portion of the human species is invariably degraded into a subservient instrument of the passions of the other. Female beauty is trained but to enhance the pleasures of a despotic master, and to be secluded by his selfishness and his suspicion from the intercourse of society. This dominant spirit exists not merely among the higher classes of society, but extends to the dwellings of private life, and affords little opportunity, to those whom it oppresses, for the exercise either of love or of virtue. From the subjugation which it perpetuates there is no escape. Hope and liberty are equally lost. The darkness is always the same ; and the unhappy victims have nothing to do but to submit, in the very tameness of despondency, to the will of their jealous and tyrannical masters.

The religion of the Hindu afforded an early sanction to this unhappy humiliation of the female sex. Framed in the very spirit of partiality and injustice, it has exercised a corresponding influence over the whole order of society. The seraglio derives authority from its enactments ; and it legitimates the despotism which has left nothing to the feebleness of woman but slavery and submission.

Under this religion we look for no bond of union in the married state, but such as may exist between the master and the slave. The number of wives

does not appear to have been limited by a single precept or command. The cells of the harem are to be augmented, and inmates supplied, according to the fancy, the caprice, or the means of the husband. He who was taught to consider himself as of a superior nature, was to rule over a number of beings whom he regarded as of a subordinate class ; the inferior many were to depend for happiness on the will of the superior one ; and the connexion which was thus formed, a connexion always of doubtful love and certain tyranny, was calculated rather to ensure on one side the obedience of fear, and to confirm on the other the authority of command, than to promote the felicity of domestic union, by exciting a mutuality of affection and of esteem.

The Hindu wife can scarcely be said to be the companion of her husband, the solace of his cares, or the object of his regard. She is not expected to please by qualities of mind, but by servility of obedience. She has nothing to do but to give children to her master, and to conform to his will ; and she might be estranged from the essential duties of the wife and mother, if she were permitted to direct her attention to intellectual accomplishments. In early life, accordingly, she is carefully immured in the dwelling of her parents ; and, when married, she is, with similar caution, secluded in the apartments of the harem. After having passed eight or ten years beneath the rigid inspection of parental vigilance, she is, for the rest of her days, to submit to the suspicious superintendence of conjugal jealousy. No means of improvement are afforded to her youth. In general she can neither read nor write. To her, the acquirements which enhance the charm of beauty and of virtue, are of little value. It is enough

if she possess the habits of docility, and learn to obey.

She is not doomed by marriage merely to a rigorous seclusion from the world. She is charged, as was the lady of ancient Greece, with the cares and anxieties of household management. Labours little adapted to the delicacy of her sex, are to be patiently endured. Every neglect of her domestic offices is a high and a penal offence against the legitimate but despotic authority of her husband; and so earnest is the law to enforce the industry of the Hindu wife, that she is expressly required not merely to occupy the hours of the day in her family arrangements, but “to rise while it is yet night” in order to resume the drudgery which the servitude of marriage may prescribe*.

The injustice which thus depresses the sex, extends to the actions and the will of the widow. The despotism of the departed husband claims, even from the grave, the devotion of the wives whom he has left behind him. One of them, at least, is required, as we have seen, to ascend the pile on which his body is to be consumed, in order that he may not be deprived of the future attendance of the slave, from whom he has been accustomed to receive a prescribed and heartless obedience; and female life is daily to be sacrificed in compliance with an institution utterly

* Ch. xx. Code of Gentoo Laws and the Ordinances of the Pandits. This code was collected from numerous volumes by Bramins, whom Mr. Hastings invited from all parts of Hindostan to Calcutta for the purpose of completing the compilation under his immediate inspection. The laws are evidences of that characteristic despotism of the Hindu husband, which seems to have been coeval with the Hindu religion.

opposed to every principle of utility, of humanity and of justice, and utterly adverse to the order, the welfare, and the happiness of society.

One class of women, indeed, among the Hindus, is set apart for a different lot. The girl, selected by the priest for her symmetry and her beauty, and destined by his authority for the impure service of the pagoda, is instructed with skilful assiduity in all the accomplishments necessary to the purposes of her future vocation. She is taught to display her slender ankles in the mazes of the dance, to heighten the loveliness of her form and features by graceful decorations, to braid her hair in perfumed knots, and to allure and fascinate attention by the charm of music. No voice of a buried husband is to command her to ascend the lighted pile. No seclusion in the harem is to subdue her spirit, or wither her beauties. She is to be the servant only of her gods, to exercise her wantonness in their worship, to augment by her seductions the number of their votaries, and to engage their favour by the oblations of her impurity. The Grecian courtesan was but her image; and the Hindu, like the Athenian of old, was to seek compensation for the dulness and inelegance of domestic life, in the sprightliness and the accomplishments of consecrated but meretricious beauty.

The Hindu women who are reserved for the honours of the wife and the mother, experience, during their lives, few cares but those of vigilance and restraint. After having completed their novitiate of seclusion in the parental dwelling, they are to be united to a husband with whom they had never conversed, to whom it would be an unprecedented crime to object, and for whose precarious affections

they are to contend, in doubtful and hostile competition, with each other. They bring with them no dowry but money and submission ; they are wedded to authority and despotism in the person of their masters ; and they are at once the creatures and the victims of institutions directly at variance with all those reciprocal duties and affections which, in their proper exercise, constitute the dignity and the felicity of married life.

The law of the magistrate and the force of custom co-operate with religion to confirm and perpetuate this degraded condition of the sex. " Women are " in general to have no property." They are declared to be perpetually in a state of tutelage, and to be unfit for any other. " Their fathers govern " them in their childhood, their husbands in their " youth, and their sons in their old age." They are not even permitted to open one of their sacred volumes. Whether from contempt of their understanding or of their levity, they are said " to have " nothing to do with the wisdom of the Vedas"; and it is cruelly and contemptuously added, that, " as they can have no evidence of the law, and no " knowledge of expiation, they must continue without hope or ransom in their sins." They are subjected, at the same time, and with similar injustice, to all the capriciousness of divorce. " The " wife, if barren, may be superseded in the eighth " year ; if her children have died, in the eleventh ; " if she speak unkindly, without delay." But it is nowhere said, that, if the husband be cruel or unfaithful, he also shall be liable to divorce ; and legislators and priests seem to have considered it as an impossible thing that the wife should be presumptuous enough to complain of the unequal lot

to which she has been subjected by the conspiring tyranny of custom and of the laws*.

In every page of the Vedas we find some precept, or some command, favourable to this unrelenting and barbarous policy. To man is assigned, by reiterated declarations, unlimited authority over his household. He may indulge in wide and varied licence ; and he may retain or dismiss his wives at his good pleasure. " But by a girl, or by a young woman, or " a woman advanced in years, nothing must be " done for her mere pleasure." She, when married, " must revere her husband as a god, though he be " unobservant of approved usages, devoid of good " qualities, and even enamoured of another woman." She must " never resist, never complain, never " indulge in sacrifices to the gods apart from her " lord, and never, but in proportion as she honours " him by obedience, expect to be exalted in heaven." If she violate the duties thus prescribed, " she shall " be in this world infamous, and in the next shall " enter into the body of a shekel, or be afflicted " with diseases which punish crimes." Her husband, on her death, may again " light up the nuptial " fires ;" but, from the decease of her husband, " she must never even name the name of another " man," and, if it be not her lot to ascend his

* *Laws of Menu*, by Sir William Jones, ch. ix. p. 1, 2, 4, 19, &c. Doctor Robertson seems to have supposed that the custom of secluding women among the Hindus was adopted from the Mahometans ; and he grounds his opinion on a passage in the drama of *Sacountala*. But he at the same time admits, and quotes Strabo to prove, that women in India were guarded in the time of Alexander with the utmost vigilance and jealousy. Roberts. *India*. Appendix. He might have quoted the oldest writings of the Hindus to the same purpose.

funeral pile, "she must emaciate her body by " living on pure flowers, and devote herself to perpetual austerity of pious suffering." While the husband is permitted to associate with "the " wives of singers and of dancers and of such base " men, or with servant girls maintained by one " master, or with female anchorites of an heretical " religion, at the expense of an inconsiderable fine ;" the wife is explicitly warned that, if she permit a man to talk with her at a place of pilgrimage, in the shadow of a grove, or at the confluence of rivers ; or to touch her apparel and ornaments ; or to send her flowers and perfumes ; or to sit with her on the same couch ; that man shall be held guilty of adultery with her, and both shall become liable to the last punishment of the law *. Thus surrounded by restrictions which close upon her on every side, and liable to the penal imputation of even constructive crime, the married woman is to exist but for another, and unite the wife and the mother in the slave. And what, in this world, is to be her recompence ? She is to be numbered as a wife among many wives who are no less miserable than herself, who have equal claims on the affection of her husband, who are equally bound to minister to his gratification, and equally subject to the cognizance of laws, framed only to enforce their unlimited obedience to the capriciousness of his will, and the tyranny of his despotism†.

* Laws of Menu. Works of Sir William Jones, vol. viii. pp. 269, 270, 271, 272, 378, 388, 399.

† " My husband," says a female, in the Heetopades, " may, if he please, sell me to the gods, or give me to the Bramins ;" that is, as the translator interprets it, devote her to the sacrifice of the Maramedha. Heetopad. Transl. by Sir William Jones, p. 185.

These laws seem to recognise but one virtue, voluntary or compulsory, in women. To the generous sentiment, the pure and disinterested love, the noble confidence, the tenderness delighted to lavish itself on the object of its devotion, they have no reference. They were made for the sole purpose of securing the chastity of the wife, not by inspiring her with high and holy motive, but by announcing the punishments reserved for infidelity, and confirming the despotism of jealous restraint. The glance of a strange eye, the approach of a strange hand, a word of salutation from a strange lip, they denounce as dangerous or fatal to the virtue which they guard; and the regulations which they prescribe for the restraint of the frailty imputed to the sex, are announced in terms too explicit to be misunderstood, and too gross for modesty either to repeat or to hear*.

The lawgiver has denounced the crime of adultery with unequal and inequitable rigor. The punishment varies according to the class of the offenders. Fine, banishment, mutilation, tonsure, a confiscation of property, may sufficiently atone for an adulterous connexion with a person of an inferior rank†. But the woman of higher rank who offends against the law is surely to perish; and the inspired Menu has pronounced her sentence with more than the severity of the Athenian Draco: "If a wife, proud of her family and of the great qua-

* They enumerate, with the most indecent minuteness, every act by which chastity may be sullied, and punishment merited; but I dare not quote them. Code of Gentoo Laws, ch. xix.

† Some of these punishments are of a singular character; but here also I must content myself with a general indication. Code Gentoo Laws, ch. xix.

“ lities of her kinsfolk, violate the duties she owes
 “ to her lord, let the king doom her to be devoured
 “ by dogs in a place much frequented; and let him
 “ bind the adulterous man on an iron bed well
 “ heated, under which the executioner shall throw
 “ logs continually till the sinful wretch be consumed*.”

Under a system thus cruel and absurd, all social intercourse is impaired and vitiated, and the progress of civilization is opposed by apparently insuperable obstructions. What delicacy of manners may be expected where the wife is to leave her chamber but by the permission of her husband; where, if she be suffered to pass beyond the walls of her prison, the long veil is to conceal her countenance from the unholy gaze of the people†, and the vigilance of special attendants is to watch over her conduct; and where the jealousy with which she is guarded subsides only when she is known to be immured in a distant apartment, and incapacitated from sullyng the suspicious and vindictive humour of her master? What results favourable to the human faculties, or to the charities and affections which sweeten life, can be expected from a state of domestic society in which there is so little occasion afforded for the exercise of good will, of mutual attachment, or of reciprocal esteem; and the husband-lord is to mete out his kindness as he wills to wives who are to compete with each other for his capricious favour, and are equally subject to his capricious authority? What

* *Laws of Menu.* Sir William Jones' Works, vol. viii. p. 300.

† It was formerly a crime punishable by death for any man to approach the road on which any of the king's wives were travelling. Strabo, xv. p. 1037.

source of refinement can we look for in a condition of things which, ratifying the most unequal ties, and degrading marriage into a union of the despot and the slave, cannot but corrupt and degrade the heart, and tend to substitute in one party implicit obedience for generous and voluntary affection, and, in the other, the degrading pride of tyrannical authority, for the protecting and fostering care of a just and generous attachment?—We find, accordingly, that civilization, if it do not retrograde, does not advance in the East. The presence and equality of the sex are wanting to soften manners, and to encourage the politeness of social refinement. The science and the art of the earliest periods are neither surpassed, nor equalled, by the art and science of the present day. Dynasties are changed, empires are overthrown, a race of triumphant foreigners are established, England tenders her laws and her knowledge to the people, but the native mind continues unchanged; and causes which, in every other portion of the globe, have produced political and intellectual revolution, and changed the whole aspect of modes and manners, have assailed the unhappy institutions of Hindostan in vain, and left untouched the predominant features of the Hindu character.

SECT. III.

Polygamy, in its fullest extent, established by the Koran—Easy repudiation of the wife—Restraints, duties, punishments—Domestic manners those of the master and the slave—Exclusion of women from the paradise of Mahomet—Their future state left doubtful by the Koran—The paradisaical houri to succeed the terrestrial wife—Mahometan society, how affected by the degradation of the sex.

IT does not appear that the disciples of Mahomet have learned to be more just to the rights of the female sex, than the worshippers of Vishnu or of Brama. The Mahometan girl, after having been subjected to restraint from her birth, is married young, and without any reference to affection or choice. The husband is selected by her parents only to become her master. From the obscure privacy of the parental home, she is conducted to the bridal chamber, henceforth to endure the uncontrolled authority of conjugal power. No stranger is to be admitted into her presence. Even a brother is separated from her by a boundary which may rarely, if ever, be passed; and the charities of kindred are to merge for ever in the exclusive duty required by the unequal tyranny of the laws.

This duty converts the wife into a slave. Whatever be the negligence or contumacy with which she is treated, she may not remonstrate. She may be accused, and questioned, and punished; but the voice of accusation from her lip would be a frightful omen in a seraglio. When her husband appears, she must clothe her face in smiles, and bend to his pleasure and caprice, or abide the punishment due to contumacy and disrespect. She may be degraded, chas-

tised, divorced, put to death, in his wrath. No inquiry is made concerning her fate. No appeal to justice may bring to light the secrets of the harem*.

This state of society emanates from the Koran. The polygamy which Mahomet found established among the Arabs, neither his interest nor his passions permitted him to disclaim or to modify. The husband has been, therefore, invested with all the privileges of a pernicious and prescriptive authority, and allowed, if not to increase the number of his wives at will, at least to indulge in the ample licence of an unlimited concubinage. Political expediency was the only measure of the law. The master prophet disdained to subject his rules to moral considerations; and he soon found how much better his purposes were to be accomplished by gratifying, than by restricting, the heated and impure passions of his warlike followers.

There is a restriction in the Koran, but it is rendered useless by a counteracting indulgence. If the Mussulman were apparently limited to four wives †, he was to be fully compensated for the scantiness of this allowance; and the permission "to exchange one wife for another wife," was generously conceded by the kindness of the prophet. Yet, as if this facility of change were not sufficient to satisfy his passion or his caprice, he may legally take to himself those women, whether they be married or otherwise, "whom his right hand shall possess as slaves ‡." Of the number which he may thus enrol in the list

* Dow's Dissertat. pp. 7, 79. † Koran, vol. i. ch. 4.

‡ "Ye are forbidden to take to wife free women who are married, except those women whom your right hand shall possess as slaves."

of his concubines, there is no limitation. He may add to his Harem, at will, by pillage or purchase ; and he may well admit that the prophet has not been illiberal in the accommodation which has been thus extended to the profligacy or caprice of desire.

Under the Koran the husband is authorized to repudiate his wife upon the slightest disgust, and to take her back upon the slightest whim ; but no reciprocal liberty is extended to the wife. She may separate herself from her lord in certain cases of neglect and cruelty ; but the privilege can scarcely be exercised with safety or with honour ; and the freedom obtained by the divorce is generally accompanied by the loss of property, or by public reproach*.

Every caution of the law is exercised to satisfy the jealousy and suspicion of one sex by restricting the liberty of the other. Women are not merely required to be staid in their deportment ; “ to restrain their eyes, “ to veil their necks, to discover neither their hands, “ nor their face, nor the ornaments of their persons†,” and to avoid all intercourse, however momentary, beyond the circuit of their prison. They must attend to the duties of their household, and economise the property of their husbands with rigorous exactness. If they prove perverse or negligent, they may be haughtily rebuked, confined to their apartments, and mortified by stripes‡. For crimes of a deeper die, they are to experience a more adequate punishment. No palliation of their errors is to be found in the

* Sale. Prelim. Disc. sect. iv. p. 178. Smith de Mirib. ac Institut. Turcar. ep. ii. p. 5. Chardin. Voyage de Perse. tom. i. p. 169.

† Kor. vol. ii. c. xxiv. p. 192. ‡ Kor. vol. i. ch. iv. p. 101.

neglect and tyranny to which they are exposed ; and by the very authority which permits the husband to satisfy the utmost vagrancy of desire, a lingering death is awarded to the incontinence of the wife, and she is " to be imprisoned in a separate chamber until " death release her " * from her sorrows and her shame.

Mahomet has yet further degraded the female sex. Whether he intended to admit women into his paradise is a question which has been much and earnestly discussed by the more learned of his disciples ; and the opinion has been generally embraced, that they shall be finally rewarded or punished according to their deeds, by the inflexible equity which shall reward or punish the deeds of men. But in the whole Koran there is not a text which encourages the sex to indulge any ardent hope of future felicity. The pious and warlike Mussulman, indeed, shall be obeyed, hereafter, by the faithful ministry of eighty thousand attendants, and shall enjoy the eternal espousals of seventy-two wives, the Houris of Paradise, distinguished by their symmetry, their fidelity, and their love, and glowing with all the bloom and beauty of immortal youth. In this scene of enjoyment, however, there is no reason to conclude that the wives, who have endured the caprice of his passions on earth, shall be permitted to participate hereafter his glory and his happiness. The apostle seems to have thought that their inferior natures were unworthy to share such high delights ; and, scarcely

* Koran. ch. iv. p. 95. This was the punishment of fornication and adultery in women. The Sonna has mitigated the sentence, and decreed that the maiden guilty of fornication shall receive one hundred stripes, and the adulterer shall be stoned to death.

déigning to cast a single ray across the darkness of their future destiny, he has left them nothing, at best, but the feeble and ambiguous expectation, that they may outlive the grave, and receive, in some separate region of hereafter, their unequal pittance of repose or joy*.

The effects of this contempt or degradation of the female sex, have been deeply felt. No home is left for the exercise of those delightful charities of our nature, which, cherished in domestic privacy, extend their influence through the whole intercourse of society. The kindred amities of parent and child; and husband and wife, which animate with generous and harmonizing affection the common bosom of the household, and bind each to each in the same golden bond of concord and good will, are banished from the dwelling where the authority of rule demands the submission of servitude, and union is enfeebled by the conspiring operation of the jealousy and suspicion which tyrannize, and the fear and awe which obey. The modes and forms of general life are equally influenced by the condition of the sex. The

* The passages quoted by Sale from the Koran, to prove that Mahomet did not reject the female sex from his paradise, are not of the slightest weight. Kor. ch. iii. p. 54; ch. iv. p. 76; also, ch. iii. ch. xvi. ch. xxx. &c. The very discussion of the question in the schools of the Mahomedans demonstrates the doubt and uncertainty in which the subject is involved. Several writers on the religion of the Koran seem to state it as the opinion of the Mussulmen, that women shall be admitted into a separate region of happiness; but whether they are there to enjoy any delights analogous or approximating to those which await their husbands in paradise, has not been determined. See Chardin. Voyage. tom. ii. p. 328. Bayle Dict. Hist. Art. Mahom. P. Q. Sale's Dissertat. sect. iv. The Koran itself is utterly silent as to this separate region, or as to the future felicity, in any region, of the sex.

manners of men are neither refined by elegance, nor softened by urbanity. Association is austere and cold. The formal salute, the silent repose, the torpid air, the dull enjoyment, the cushioned indolence, are enlivened or diversified by no gleam of gaiety or of pleasure, by no occasional sprightliness of conversation, and by little interchange of social and benevolent feeling. The Greek was less dependent on the state of female society which he found or confirmed. He was urged to exertion by affairs of state, or kindled into gaiety by public festivals. But the Mussulman has no such resource. He may be stimulated or compelled to exertion by the fury of fanaticism or by the necessities of life, but little remains to soften and civilize his mind, to call forth his faculties to salutary and humanizing exercise, and to counteract the depressing influence of the civil despotism to which he is subject. In literature, since the days of the Caliphs, he has displayed neither taste nor fancy; and, by the exclusive temper with which he has erected the Harem, and pronounced his interdict on the sex, he has not merely retarded the progress of refinement, but contributed to perpetuate the vices of a rude, and, apparently, irremediable barbarism.

SECT. IV.

No polygamy under the gospel—Equal and salutary laws of marriage and divorce—The husband and the wife subject to the same rule, and bound by the same obligations—Penalty of violated duty to each—Reciprocal engagement—Domestic peace founded on domestic affection—No slavery, no despotism—Rules laid down for mutual observance—Forcible and beautiful, as well as equitable—The sanctity of marriage proclaimed—Consequences in the early state of the church, and in later times—Result on public and domestic manners.

THE domestic relations, from which flows a large portion of the miseries and comforts of human life, have been modified and impaired, as we have seen, under other institutions of religion, by polygamy and divorce. The first of these laid the foundation of a despotism as pernicious as it was unjust; the second has been always pliant, and often instrumental, to the purposes of the discontented and the profligate; and both have tended, in a high degree, to diminish the dignity and happiness of one sex, to corrupt and harden the temper and manners of the other, and to destroy that mutual harmony and attachment, and that union of interest and of sentiment, which constitute the genuine felicity of married life. The consequence of this state of things has been traced. In the East, the vile seclusion and abject degradation of the harem still afford an explicit commentary on the influence and spirit of polytheism; and if the sex, in the more enlightened regions of Greece and Italy, were exposed to the tyranny of domestic despotism, we may trace the degradation to that legal facility of divorce by which they were rendered

perpetually subject to the insult and disgrace of unmerited repudiation, and by which the husband being exalted into a master, the wife was humbled into a slave.

The laws which thus tainted domestic manners, or thus degraded the character of the female sex, have not been permitted to sully the pages of the Gospel. The legislator of Christianity, who came in the spirit of purity and peace, was not to legislate for one half of the human species at the expense of the other. Under his dispensation not only was polygamy to cease, with all the vices and sorrows of which it was the source, but also that licence of divorce which introduced so much disorder and confusion into the very bosom of domestic intercourse, and afforded every liberty of change which caprice or profligacy might desire. The union of marriage was no longer to be dissolvable at will by a new passion for a new object. No repudiation was to be permitted, except in the case of convicted adultery. The husband was to enjoy as little power as the wife to tear asunder the bonds by which they were connected; and both were to observe, under equal responsibility, the essential duty of inviolable fidelity. The wantonness of change in either party was thus discouraged and restrained; the fear of change was thus quieted and assured; and the interdict which was uttered for such purpose, was to become the efficient cause of domestic welfare, and the virtual guardian of domestic virtue.

The law is express. The violation of the law is no less explicitly denounced. "Whosoever shall
" put away his wife, save for the cause of fornication,
" causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever

“ shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery *.” Divorce could not be restricted by a declaration more clear or more solemn. The most subtle cannot evade, and the most simple can understand it; and the double responsibility which is imposed on the offender, responsibility for his own guilt, and for the guilt which he may cause, might be thought sufficient to enforce the prohibition, and to repress the crime.

But Christ looked from the conduct to the heart; and in the heart he sought to lay the foundation of obedience. It is not enough that man conform externally to the law. Crime may exist without deed. The professors of the gospel are, therefore, admonished, not merely to observe the letter, but the spirit, of the precept; that is, to watch over their passions and their thoughts, and to preserve from contamination the purity of the mind. The secret emotion, the incipient desire, the inward movement, the glance of the eye, may merit the punishment due to the adulterer. If the guilt be conceived within, the law is violated; and the authority, which proclaimed the law, has also proclaimed, that “ Whoso looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart †.”

And the obedience which is here required is not to consist in a cold and formal observance. The union of marriage is of a sacred character, not to be cemented by worldly and mercenary considerations, but by those consecrated affections which preserve the fidelity and unity of attachment as well in poverty

* Matt. v. 31, 32. See also Matt. x. 9; Luke xvi. 6; 1 Corinth. vii. 10, 11.

† Matt. v. 28.

as in wealth; and which is capable of enduring without diminution, or rather is brightened while it endures, the rudest and the most painful trials. The husband and wife, we are told, should be prepared to sacrifice for each other, if necessary, every affection which they had hitherto been accustomed to consider as most dear and binding. No other relationship of life is to be suffered to interfere between them. They are to leave father, and mother, and sister, and brother, rather than suffer the sacredness of their common engagement to be impaired*. They are to become one; to be united in the sameness of interest and of heart; and "whether in sickness " or in health, in joy or in sorrow," they are to administer to each other with mutual fidelity "so long " as they both shall live."

The duties of marriage are not left to float in ambiguity, or to depend on fine theories and subtle speculations. They are briefly summed up for our edification in the most cogent and intelligible language. "Husbands," it is said, "love your wives, love them " as yourselves, love them as Christ so loved his " church. Dwell with them in knowledge, be one " with them, and give honour unto them as to the " weaker vessels, and as being heirs together of the " grace of life"—"Wives, submit with reverence to " your husbands, as unto the Lord, for the husband " is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of " the church. Be subject, therefore, unto them, " and love them. Let them behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. And as a bride is

* "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife." Ephes. v. 31. Mark x. 7, 8, 9.

“ adorned for her husband, adorn yourselves, but
“ not in that outward adorning of plaiting the hair,
“ or of wearing of gold, or of putting on apparel ;
“ but in that ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,
“ which is incorruptible in the sight of God, and of
“ great price *.”

Nothing can heighten the force and beauty of these precepts—Husbands love your wives. The command involves at once your duty and your happiness. But love them not with a common and frail attachment, not with an attachment depending for its continuance on the feebleness of earthly considerations, but love them even as ye love yourselves, or yet more, as Christ loved the church which he reared up by his wisdom and his power, and cemented by his sufferings and his blood. Aid and protect them by your knowledge, respect and cherish them even for the feebleness of their nature which demands your support, sustain their weakness with the delicacy of a generous and disinterested tenderness, remember that they are joint heirs with you “ in the grace of “ life,” and “ be one with them” alike in the days of prosperity and of adversity—Wives, submit in all gentleness to your husbands, for they are your head. Let your love be mingled with the respect due to their superior authority. Repay and preserve their kindness by a chaste and affectionate fidelity. Give them your heart; and study to bind them more closely to you in the bonds of a pure and voluntary attachment, not by the artful embellishments of external decoration, or the studious elegance of the manners of the world, but by that incorruptible beauty which adorns the mind, even the grace and ornament of a meek and

* Epist. to Ephes. v. 25 ; Coloss. iii. 19 ; First of Peter, iii. 7 ; Ephes. v. 22.

quiet spirit, so lovely in the estimation of all good men, and so precious in the sight of God.

The sanctions of this happy and sacred union, as recorded in the New Testament, are of a temporal and eternal character. In every page we discover, on this subject, some affectionate admonition, or some alarming menace; and counsel and prohibition, and precept and command, are employed, with equal earnestness, to guard and preserve the sanctity of marriage. The guilty husband, and the unfaithful wife, are charged not to deceive themselves with the hope of impunity. "Tribulation and sorrow," such is the annunciation, "shall assuredly be the lot of the adulterer*." Adultery itself is classed with the most degrading and pernicious crimes. It is placed by Evangelist and Apostle, in the foul catalogue of idolatry, extortion, blasphemy, robbery, and murder†; and, if they who are guilty of those sins, and shall die in them, "may in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven," the same exclusion is reserved for the punishment of the crime which violates the sacred union of man and wife‡.

The institution of marriage which has been thus defined and thus sanctioned, is intimately connected with private and public welfare. It stands opposed to polygamy, which is at variance with the constitution of our nature, and to that facility of divorce, which has been always a source of mischief and of crime. It represses that licentious commerce which degrades the character of both sexes, incapacitates the mind for all moral and intellectual pleasures, wears away that quick and ready percep-

* Revel. ii. 22. † First of Corinth. vi. 9, 10; Matt. xv. 19.

‡ 1 Corinth. vi. 9, 10.

tion of guilt which constitutes an essential quality in every virtuous mind, and generally produces that profligacy of principle which manifests itself in a contempt for all the obligations of piety and of virtue. It tends to preserve the peace and union of married life by securing or strengthening the bonds of domestic harmony, and enforcing the mutuality of domestic interests and affections. It raises the female sex from a state of dependence and humiliation, to their proper condition in life; affords them security in marriage from the insult and shame of unmerited repudiation; supplies, on many occasions, the decline of personal attachment in their husbands, by a sense of religious obligation; and gives them an authority in their household which better enables them to fulfil the high duties required of them as matrons and as wives. It provides with equal justice for the security and comfort of the weaker part, and for the legitimate authority of the stronger; and, admitting the sex to a participation of the advantages and blessings of social intercourse, and teaching them to respect themselves while it demands for them the respect of the world, women have become under its protection, incomparably more improved in their understanding, more refined in their sentiments, more cultivated in their manners, and more certain of a just consideration in public and private life, than they ever could pretend to be under any other system of marriage established by law or religion in the world.

Thus a new æra may be said to have commenced with the Gospel, of domestic enjoyments, virtues, and manners. For the miseries of the harem, the Asiatic servitude, the scandals of the naked exhibition, the vile and disgusting transfer, the easy,

unprincipled, or capricious divorce, are substituted an equality of rights, a moral order, and a happy tranquillity. Women, endowed with their just privileges, are rendered more amiable by being less coerced, and more respected; or, if they be required to obey, it is not the master of a seraglio by whose frown or smile they are to be governed, nor the despot who is armed with the ready powers of divorce, but the husband who is to repay and protect them by his care and his love. Marriage, instead of being a connexion ratified for the purpose of supplying the husband with a steward or a slave, and as easily to be dissolved as the most common and vulgar pledge, is invested with a solemnity and a sanctity which render it, in the highest degree, binding and obligatory. Giving to neither party a power injurious to the other, it requires a perfect mutuality of kindness and of affection; and it contributes, as far as any institution can contribute, to preserve and animate the beautiful train of family charities which a corrupt and shameless intercourse banished from Greece, and on which so essentially depend the peace, the order, and the happiness of domestic life.

By marriage, then, according to the law of Christ, the best interests of each of the parties concerned are protected and preserved. If women be raised to a higher rank in the estimation of society than they had before enjoyed, they are not the less bound to consult the welfare and happiness of their husbands. If men be deprived of the dominion which they had been accustomed to exercise, they have acquired a new right to the undeviating love and fidelity of their wives. The condition of both is eminently improved. Both are united for their

mutual happiness by a law of mutual justice. Both are to dwell together, under the common bond of wise and salutary obligation, for their common felicity. Is there restriction? It is that only which limits caprice and crime. Is there liberty? It is that only which is regulated by equal and impartial duty. The union of the household is consecrated by the spirit of liberal and generous association. Instead of the obsequiousness of the slave, there is love. Instead of the depression of one party, and the domination of the other, there are concordant obligations, and peaceful and hallowed unanimity. Under the shelter of this domestic economy, new or better relationships spring up. The duties due to father and mother, or by them, are more clearly ascertained. Children, instead of being weighed in the balance of public utility, and exposed or neglected by the cruelty of their natural protectors, are consigned to the guardianship of parental probity and affection; and the name of family is that only of a kindred association, held together by the unperverted charities of the heart, and regulated by the rule of reciprocal obligation. If these effects be not always experienced in married life, let not the law be blamed, but the folly or the guilt which resists the law. Often, however, such consequences are visible in the domestic scene. A harmony, a tenderness, a community of heart and of spirit, are there to be found, which never could exist beneath the despotism of Oriental authority, in the unequal society of an Attic dwelling, or under the impure and offensive laws of Spartan policy.

From other institutions of marriage, indeed, the happiness and virtue of human life derived little advantage. The female sex, insulted or depressed

by them all, neither received improvement from society, nor contributed to its refinement; and, where domestic duty was scarcely better than the obedience of servitude; and confidence and love, in their genuine acceptation, were to enter so little into the composition of domestic enjoyment, the virtues which spring up round the hearth, and from thence issue forth to take their parts in the concerns of men, must have been proportionably languid and few. It was only when the conjugal union was invested by Christ with the sacred character of equality, that the morality and the felicity of the union were to be sustained by their proper aliment, and to acquire their due maturity. The husband was no longer to trust for happiness to the feeble and fallacious efficacy of a suspicious coercion. The wife was to be apprehensive no longer of the sudden and capricious divorce, and was to pay her tribute of fidelity and of affection under the same law which required affection and fidelity in return. The reciprocal confidence which hence arose was to become a new bond of amity and attachment; and the happiness of married life, thus heightened or confirmed, was to contribute more to the advancement of the moral character of mankind, both in a public and private view, than all the treatises and systems of Ethics which have ever issued from the fertile subtlety or elaborate learning of the schools.

When the religion of Christ began to obtain an establishment in the world, the influence which it was calculated to exercise on the marriage union, and on social life, became speedily apparent. Wherever it was adopted in its purity, the manners of men were proportionally softened, and the principles

of men were proportionally improved. To the views of the statesman were no longer to be sacrificed the charities of household and of heart. Sensuality was checked. Libertinism was abashed. The spectacles of debauchery and riot were discountenanced. Bacchus no longer raised his thyrsis on the hills. The rabble rout of the Bona Dea was no longer led by appropriate priests through the streets of the cities. The honour and the fidelity of the marriage bed were considered in their consequences, as essential to the order and happiness of life; and the young, the beautiful, and the rich, instead of surrendering themselves to the vile enjoyments of sanguinary exhibitions, or wantoning in the train of devotional processions, cherished the reserve and delicacy of the sex in the quiet observance of domestic duty, or mingled with domestic enjoyments the charities due to the sick, the aged, and the poor.

The imperial Constantine demonstrated by his laws the sincerity of his conversion to this new religion. He had witnessed the humanizing effects of the gospel which he had embraced; and had not uselessly compared the defective institutions of the Pagan hymen, with the simple but salutary law of Christian marriage. The decrees of previous legislators, on the subject of adultery and divorce, were accordingly annulled; and the virtue or policy of the monarch adopted the institution which was so well calculated to improve the morals and manners of his people.

All the nations of modern Europe have respected like him the laws of marriage and of divorce, which were announced by Christ and his apostles. They have, in many instances, been guilty of error, and

in some, have promoted the evils which it was their object to repress. But their most defective laws for the regulation or sanction of the marriage union, are unequivocally of a less pernicious character, than the most applauded ordinances, for the same purpose, of Greece and Italy; and they have abundantly testified by their regulations how fully they were convinced of the wisdom with which the union of marriage has been guarded, and sanctioned, and sanctified, in the pages of the Gospel.

If that wisdom, in its influence, may not yet have accomplished every thing, it has accomplished much. There are still examples enough of dissolute conduct; and there may yet be some to decry or to sneer at the institution of Christian marriage. But a revolution has taken place evidently favourable to human improvement. The philosopher and the statesman no longer utter the degrading theories, on the intercourse of the sexes, which were so often and so publicly heard at Athens, at Sparta, and at Rome; and the scandals of libertinism and of divorce, which were so unblushingly avowed by the highest characters of former days, are now neither vindicated nor acknowledged by any man who, in the slightest degree, respects society and himself. On the contrary, a reserve and decency favourable to virtue are every where required. The indignation or contempt of all the respectable classes of life would be excited by the open utterance of an impurity either in speech or writing; and Solon, and Socrates, and Plato, as well as many of the sages and poets of Rome, frequently addressed their age, accomplished as it was, with a grossness and licence of language which would now be scarcely

attempted or tolerated by the last and lowest of mankind.

That the purity of Christian doctrines has thus contributed to the reformation of public manners, and, wherever it has reached, introduced into public and private life a reserve and delicacy unknown in former times, will scarcely be denied. But let us trace this spirit of the gospel to the scene in which it more especially operates. Let us proceed to the respectable household of the husband and the wife who are conscious of their duty, and have learned to value as they ought what may be termed the new covenant of marriage, and examine its effects in the picture which is there exhibited. Instead of the suspicions and degradations which, under other laws, mingled with and tainted the enjoyments of domestic intercourse, we discover peace, order, harmony, and love. Instead of the tyrant in the exercise of despotism, or the drudge in the degradation of dependence, we behold the husband cherishing and rejoicing in the virtues of his wife; and the wife paying the merited tribute of respect and affection to her husband, resting in happiness and honour among her family, administering the morality of her example to those around her, and circling her happy hearth with all the blessings of the domestic charities. We seem to dwell in the abiding place of pleasures "more refined and sweet" than the best of those which can be found in the train of fashion and of the world. And a higher and nobler friendship, a more contented and more cordial union; an esteem confirming love; a love heightening esteem; a reciprocity of aid and trust which augments the joys of prosperous life, and gilds and brightens the darkness of adversity; a com-

munity of heart which finds its highest happiness in a community of blessings, attest to us the influence and the power of those precepts which have limited the authority of one sex to restore its dignity to the other, and, by the wholesome interposition of a just and equal restraint, have augmented at once the virtue and the felicity of both.

CHAPTER X.

THE FUTURE STATE.

SECT. I.

All nations have acknowledged a future state—Views of the Greeks—The realms of the shades visited by the Grecian heroes—Details of the poets—Homer's evocation of the ghosts—Their appetite for blood—Earthly passions and discontents—Reward scantily conferred—Retribution abundant, but not always equitable—No felicity for the good—Fabulous punishment of the wicked—Virgil—Inimitable description of the entrance into hell—Various regions—Their inhabitants—Tartarus—The surrounding and fiery deluge of Phlegethon—Terrific punishments—Elysium—Poetical embellishments—Meads, groves, streams—Insidious enjoyments—Continued predominance of earthly passions and desires—Moral estimate—Violation of all probability and justice by the poet—The terrors of his ghosts—Their cold and languid silence—Their mangled or mutilated limbs—Their unspiritual character—Their unimproved existence—Philosophy of Virgil in his views of hell—Ambiguous and obscure—Purgation preparatory to Elysium—Elysium to be succeeded, after a thousand years, by a state of transmigration—The change unaccounted for—Philosophers of Greece and Rome—Various and contradictory opinions on the nature of the soul—Doctrine of Pythagoras and of Plato—Their metempsychosis—The three-fold nature of the soul—The soul an emanation from God, and to return, after due purifications in its earthly state, to its original source—Contradiction and absurdity of these tenets—Socrates—His uncertainty and doubts—General scepticism of the learned avowed and diffused.

THE tenet of a future state has been embraced by every nation of the earth. It remained not to be diffused by the reasonings of the philosopher, or the enunciations of the legislator. The ignorant

and the wise, the rude and the civilized, have here agreed ; and the hopes and fears of men, taking the same direction, have universally anticipated in futurity the rewards and punishments due to the good and evil deeds of the virtuous and of the wicked.

But, though these anticipations were every where felt, they were various and vague. The persuasion was the same in principle, but the heaven and the hell to which it looked forward were of no uniform character. Folly and inconsistency were mingled in every creed, varying the modes, while they affirmed the reality, of a future existence ; and the faith which clung to the doctrine remained unshaken, while the conjectures to which the doctrine gave rise were, generally, as discordant, as they were numerous and absurd.

Nations yet uncivilized and untaught, are proportionally governed by the demands and pleasures of sense. They, therefore, look to hereafter, but as to a region in which sensuality is to enjoy unbounded gratification ; and the objects most ardently pursued and passionately desired in this world, are to be the great objects of pursuit and desire in the next. The warrior shall have the glory of his battles renewed *. The hunter shall be accompanied by his dog, and occupied in the chase. The conqueror

* In the Gothic paradise, the Shades, after they have caparisoned themselves in the morning, resume their arms, enter the lists, proceed to combat, and inflict and endure innumerable wounds. But the hour of repast is that of peace. As it approaches, the combatants relax in their ferocity, and return, safe and sound, to enjoy their cups in the hall of Odin. There they renew the revels of earth, till the morning again arrives, and they are called to renew the achievements of their wonted battles. See the Edda Northern Antiq. vol. ii. p. 109. Keysler. Antiq. Septent. et Celt. p. 127.

shall quaff his favourite beverage from the skull of the enemy he has slain ; and the voluptuary shall enjoy the delights of the feast and the song, and be served by the grateful homage of his most favoured nymphs.

It might be supposed that these rude notions would be rejected with disdain by the more intellectual fancy of the civilized and the refined. But, in this respect, there was little variation of opinion. The Greek and the Roman did not surpass, in the spirituality of their persuasion, the wild barbarian whom they affected to despise ; and the heaven of the savage, whose anticipations were so stupid or so impure, was not more gross and sensual in its enjoyments, than the Elysium which has been so studiously embellished by the taste, the conjectures, and the fancy, of classical antiquity.

Many were the voyages undertaken to the region of the Shades, by the heroic temerity of former times. Orpheus penetrated into the realms of darkness in quest of his beloved Eurydice. Theseus and Pirithous accomplished the same adventure to deliver the captive Proserpine. Hercules liberated the royal Athenian, and dragged the monster Cerberus to earth. Bacchus delighted to visit the shade of his mother Semele in the bowers of Elysium. And Rampsinothes, king of Egypt, enjoyed the society of Ceres in the halls of her son-in-law Pluto, and returned to earth distinguished by the love, and loaded with the gifts, of the enamoured goddess*.

In the description of scenes which so many heroes were permitted to visit, the imagination of the poet has exercised its highest powers. Hesiod, Homer,

* Herodot. lib. x. c. 122.

and Pindar, among the Greeks, and Virgil, Catullus, and Claudian, among the Latins, have not been the sole poets of Greece and Rome, who have indulged in repeating or in embellishing the popular tales of Elysium or of Tartarus; and the joys and sufferings of the future, according to the superstitious reveries of the times, have been enumerated in the verse of prophet bards with all the fervor of fancy, and all the piety of faith.

But it is to Homer and Virgil that we are principally to refer for the general creed on the subject of future punishment and reward. Of the felicities of hereafter the former poet has told little, and told it feebly and coldly, though he has adverted with energy and boldness to the torments which await the wicked. Virgil is more costly and sumptuous in the decorations which he lavishes on his realms of immortality and joy, as well as more terrific and sublime in the views which he has exhibited of the regions of retribution. By a study of both, we may acquire a sufficient knowledge of the world of Shadows, and learn how far the popular belief in the blessings of Elysium and the woes of Phlegethon, was calculated to strengthen the motives of piety and of virtue, or repress the madness and audacity of crime.

I. After Ulysses had traversed the expanse of ocean, he arrived, says the poet, on the confines of hell, to consult the shade of the prophetic Tiresias. The mystic evocation was commenced. Vows were made. Libations of wine and honey were consecrated to the dead. The victims were slain; and a trench was filled with the sacrificial blood of a ewe and a ram. Instantly, innumerable ghosts arose, and fluttered, shrieking and twittering, round the

fosse. But they were chased away by the falchion of Ulysses; and the old Seer, who advanced with a golden sceptre in his hand, was permitted to lap the blood, the scent of which had provoked the appetite of the Shades, and seduced them from their abodes. The hunger or thirst of the prophet having been satisfied, the silence which he had hitherto maintained was no longer observed*. He poured forth his inspirations without reluctance, expatiated amply on the future and the past, replied to the questions which were proposed by the royal Ithacan, and, at length, his task being done, returned in sad and lonely solemnity to the gloomy regions from which he had been called.

The other ghosts were no longer repelled by the gleam of the falchion. They approached the trench, and having sufficiently satisfied their appetite for blood, they successively revealed to the curiosity of Ulysses, a succinct, and sometimes garrulous, detail of their former lives.

Of this talkative and shadowy multitude many had been guilty of flagrant crimes, and many had exercised exalted virtues. But no allusion is made by the poet to tribunal or trial, or to the justice which had pronounced the final sentence and unalterable allotment of the good and the bad; and of the whole assembly of Shades thus raised by the charm of evocation, there does not appear to have been one who was distinguished from another by any condemnation or applause, or by any discriminative mark of recompence or of retribution.

During this singular vision we look in vain for

* The taste of the blood was necessary to render the ghosts communicative. *Odyss.* xv.

any indication of the blessings reserved for the pious and the good. No green fields gladden our eyes. No blooming bowers diffuse their odours. No celestial melodies regale us from golden harps. The whole region appears disconsolate and dreary; and the most distinguished and renowned of the ghosts which had conversed with Ulysses, displayed sufficient evidences of discontent and sorrow. Tiresias easily preferred "the realms of cheerful day, to the "dark and unpleasant lands of the Shades." Agamemnon wails and weeps with pitiable imbecility. Ajax is still the victim of the wrath in which he expired, and is silent, sad, implacable, and sulky. Achilles, who is described as maintaining high control over the dead, candidly avows that he had rather exist in poverty and dependence on earth, than hold a sovereign and undisputed empire over the regions of the dead. And Hercules himself, though prepared to enjoy the pleasures most congenial to his earthly habits, holding his bow uncased, and his arrow ready for the string, and girt with the belt on which were brodered combats, and homicides, and beasts of prey, appeared not less gloomy and disconsolate than the most unhappy of the ghosts who pined around him for the terrestrial enjoyments they had lost. Most of these illustrious shades were communicative and loquacious, but they never adverted to the equity of their lot, to the beauty of the scenes in which they abode, or to the joys which awaited the Manes of the just. Even the Bard who created the scene, seems to have been as little anxious to decorate, as they were to extol it. By one expression alone does he intimate that the region was not wholly barren and unlovely; and that fancy, so rich and exuberant in the embellishment of other objects,

has solely scattered over the valleys of the blessed the yellow flowers of the grave-loving Asphodel*.

Yet we are told of the judge of the dead, and of his immutable justice; and we behold innumerable ghosts awed by the authority of his golden sceptre, crowding into the hall of his palace, and preparing to plead their cause before his high and equitable tribunal.

If, however, the blessings of Elysium were parsimoniously conferred, the punishments of Tartarus were sometimes decreed with rigid and un pitying equity. Though guilt might not have uniformly experienced the retribution which it had merited †, numerous examples were exhibited of the inflexible judgment of the council of Minos. The gigantic Tityus, the mocked, and miserable Tantalus, the unhappy Sysiphus with his interminable labours, displayed, in their sufferings, the authority and the justice of the tribunal of hell. Yet, in the punishments so decreed, there is much that is inconsistent and absurd. The ghost, without bone or flesh, as the poet tells us, is yet supplied for the purposes of retribution, with the form and feelings of corporeal being;

* Κατ' ασφοδιλον λειμωνα. Meads of Asphodel. Homer, I believe, has but once used the term Elysium. In the fourth book of the Odyssey, Menelaus is informed by Proteus, that he was not destined to finish his days at Argos, for the gods should send him to Elysium at the extremity of the earth, where the yellow haired Rhadamanthus exercised supreme authority, and the inhabitants were gifted with immortal felicity. "No snows are there, no driving showers, and no stormy winter; but soft gales, perpetually blowing from the ocean, cool and purify the air and refresh the land."

† The crimes of Jocasta, of Phædra, and of Eryphile, are enumerated; but Homer affords no ground to believe that they were condemned or punished by the infernal tribunal.

and he hungers, and thirsts, and toils, and is extended over nine acres of ground, and is exposed to birds of prey, which feast upon his liver, and scoop his entrails. The bard had limited the pleasures of the acquitted dead to sensual enjoyment, and, in the same manner, the sufferings of the guilty were to be those only of sense. We hear, we see, nothing of a spiritual and intellectual character; and the whole scene, almost too fabulous for fiction, can scarcely be said to surpass the hell of the savage, whose hopes and fears are circumscribed within the narrow circle of bodily sensations.

The Elysium, then, and the Tartarus of Homer, are frail and feeble fancies, scarcely plausible enough to deceive the credulity of the most credulous Pagan. To the upright, the first authenticates none of those sublime and elevating expectations of future recompence, which might animate them in the fulfilment of duty, or console them in the sufferings of sorrow. For them death is to be succeeded but by a reiteration of low, and languid, and limited enjoyments; and they are to bring with them to their final abode, the wretched passions by which they had been agitated in life, and the melancholy recollections which are perpetually to remind them of the pleasures that are past. In delineating the retributive terrors of Tartarus, the poet may have exercised a sounder justice. Such terrors might have carried dismay to timid and superstitious guilt; and crime might have been proportionally alarmed and repressed. But the creed of retribution was, at best, the frail work of idle reverie, and undisciplined fancy. Sometimes unjust, and sometimes ludicrous and repulsive, in its dogmas of punishment, it was scarcely or imperfectly to influence the more wise and reflecting classes

of men ; and, however it might have been received by ages of barbarism, always more ready to embrace impossibility and falsehood, than probability and truth, it was to be exposed, in a more thinking and speculative period, to the contemptuous scoff of philosophic mockery, and to the doubt or rejection of reason and common sense.

II. The great poet of Italy opens a more vivid and interesting view of the infernal regions. He mingles philosophy with fancy. Sublime horrors, and beautiful visions, are blended in the fable of his magnificent dream ; and the forms which issue so distinctly from his pencil, admirably and consistently people the scenes of softness or sadness in which his imagination delights to expatiate.

The poet commences his work of creation in the very vestibule of his infernal world. Innumerable tribes of shadowy beings are there exhibited in all the diversity of their occupations or sorrows. Some flit restlessly and unceasingly in the glooms above, some mope and wander in mists and darkness below, some press forward with impatience to pass the impure and loathsome flood. The shades of the unburied dead, men, and matrons, and short lived youths, and unmarried girls, as numerous as the leaves which the winds of Autumn strew upon the earth, stretch out their hands to the heedless and squalid Charon, and supplicate admission into his boat*. With this multitude mingle the hideous

* Huc omnis turba ad ripas effusa ruebat ;
Matres, atque viri, defunctaque corpora vitâ
Magnanimùm héroum, pueri innuptæque puellæ.
Tendebantque manus ripæ ulterioris amore.

Æneid. lib. vi. l. 305.

Hæc omnis, quam cernis, inops inhumataque turba.

Ib. 325.

forms of discord, and war, and death, and the sad tribes of grief, care, disease and toil; and this vast and ghastly population is augmented by Gorgens, and Harpies, and Centaurs, and Hydras, of various and fearful aspect, and by the bi-formed Scylla, the hundred handed Briareus, and the more dreadful prodigy of the flame-breathing Chimæra*.

On the further banks of the Styx spread out the regions allotted for the sojourn of infants who had been hurried by an early destiny to the tomb †; of those who had perished by their own hands or by the injustice of their judge; of lovers who were yet pursued by the cares and sorrows which they had experienced on earth; and of warriors still occupied by their chariots and their arms, and still marked and deformed by the ghastly wounds which they had received in their former conflicts ‡.

Two passages are opened from hence, one issuing into the realms of Tartarus, the other into the plains of Elysium.

The realms of Tartarus are defended by a triple wall, and surrounded by the flaming deluge of Phle-

* Centauri in foribus stabulant, Scyllæque bifformes,
Et centum geminus Briareus, ac bellua Lernæ
Horrendum stridens, flammisque armata Chimæra:
Gorgones, Harpyiæque, et forma tricornis umbræ.

Æneid. lib. vi. l. 286.

† Continuò auditæ voces, vagitus et ingens,
Infantumque animæ flentes in limine primo:
Quos dulcis vitæ exsortes, et ab ubere raptos.

Ib. 426.

‡ Hos juxta, falso damnati crimine mortis—
Proxima deinde—Qui sibi lethum
Insontes peperere manu—
Hic quos durus amor crudeli tabe peredit—
Deiphobum vidit, et lacerum crudeliter ora.

Ib. 430, 434, 484, &c.

gethon ; and Tisiphone, in her blood-stained garment, watches over the entrance with cruel and sleepless vigilance. From thence are heard unceasing groans, mingling with the sounds of the scourge and the clanking of chains. It is the kingdom of Rhadamanthus. He there exercises his stern and relentless authority, and compels the ghosts, in their turn, to disclose the secret iniquities of their lives ; while an avenging Fury, grasping a lash in one hand, and brandishing a serpent in the other, calls for assistance in the execution of her retributive office, on her grim and pitiless sisters. In this sojourn of woe, the discords of brethren, filial impiety, avarice the idolater of gold, adultery with its brood of crimes, the violence of unjust and barbarous war, and treason guilty of violated oaths, are visited with the penalty which they have justly merited. The sufferings decreed are as various as the guilt which demands them. One is chained to an immoveable rock. Another heaves up the hill the weight of stone. Another is fastened within the spokes of the whirling wheel. Another feeds with his blood the eternal voracity of the vulture. And all hear, amid their agonies, the upbraiding admonition—" Learn at length, ye miserable, to reverence justice, and to fear the gods *."

In an opposite direction the Elysian fields display their springing woods, their green valleys, and their bowers of bliss. A softer atmosphere hangs over the realm, and a brighter and more ample sun clothes

* - - - Phlegyasque miserrimus omnes

Admonet, et magnâ testatur voce per umbras .

Discite justitiam moniti, et non temnere Divos.

Æneid. lib vi. l. 618.

it in the splendor of purple light*. The immortal inhabitants enjoy, it is said, appropriate felicity. They exercise their limbs on the grassy plain. They wrestle, in amicable contest, on the yellow sands. They dance to harmonious sounds. They indulge in the celestial music of the seven-stringed lyre†. All the delights to which they were most attached on earth, and all the habits which they most indulged, are renewed and exercised without restraint. For the more warlike ghosts are provided shadowy chariots, horses, and arms. For the more gentle and voluptuous, feasts are spread in verdant meads; and groves of odoriferous laurel, watered by the descending stream of Eridanus, extend the cooling luxury of their shade. He who had fought and bled for the welfare of his country, who had faithfully announced the oracles of the gods, who had merited the gratitude of men by beneficent offices, or had contributed to human convenience and comfort, by the discovery or diffusion of useful arts; all such are assured of perpetual enjoyment; their temples are crowned with holy fillets, and they wander at will in the twilight of umbrageous groves, on the banks of perennial streams, or in meadows covered with flowers by a thousand rills‡.

* *Largior hinc campos æther, et lumine vestit
Purpureo.* *Æn. lib. vi. l. 640.*

† *Pars in gramineis exerceant membra palæstris,
Contentunt ludo, et fulvâ luctantur arenâ:
Pars pedibus plaudunt choreas, et carmina dicunt.*

Ib. 642.

‡ *Omnibus his niveâ cinguntur tempora vittâ—
Nulli certa domus: lucis habitamus opacis,
Riparumque toros, et prata recentia rivis
Incolimus.*

Ib. 665, et seq.

Such is the infernal world which the great poet has figured on his canvass ; and the mastery of his skill will not be denied. His pencil is perpetually varying its colours and its forms ; and he delights by the freshness, the beauty, and the vividness which he communicates to his Elysium, as much as he astonishes by the gloomy grandeur which he spreads over the fields of mourning, and the seats of punishment. But, if we estimate these representations by a moral and religious test, our admiration may, perhaps, a little subside, and we may find them neither worthy of the genius of the poet, nor honourable to the religion from whose traditionary tales they were principally derived.

Many circumstances early occur to impair the general character of the scene. The surly temper of the antient and grisly ferryman, the intemperate rudeness of his language, the sudden mitigation of his wrath by the gift of the golden bough, his frail and leaky boat groaning beneath the weight of Æneas and the Sybil, the three headed dog stretched before the gates of hell, the medicated cake, the voracity with which it is devoured, the consequent slumber of the monster*, are calculated rather to impress the mind with ludicrous ideas than with solemn and salutary sentiments, and would be more consistently admitted into the fables of a gross and ungoverned imagination, than into the awful details of another

* At ramum hunc, (aperit ramum qui vestē latebat)

Agnoscas. Tumidā ex irā tum corda residunt.

- - - - - Gemit sub pondere cymba

Sutiles - - - -

- - - - - Ille fame rabidā tria guttura pandens,

Corripit objectam, atque immania terga resolvit

Fusus humi.

Æn. lib. vi. l. 406, et seq.

world. But the poet does not merely borrow from his religion this idle imagery to decorate the mysterious regions which he displays. In the very opening of his astonishing drama, he violates, either ignorantly or wantonly, all the principles of common equity; and what shall we say of the justice of the creed, one of the dogmas of which condemns innumerable beings to wander on the banks of the Styx for a hundred years, not because they had been guilty of crime in their former existence, but because they had not been fortunate enough to experience the honours of sepulture*? As we advance, however, we discover still further reason for moral condemnation. We might not pause to lament the destiny of the Suicide†; but we know not why the innocent tribes who had been torn by death from their mothers bosom, and the guiltless victims who had perished by the perjury of the accuser, or the credulity of the judge, should be allotted to dwell in the same doleful regions, and be united in the participation of the same sorrows to which the self-murderer is condemned‡. With equal inequality of

* *Hæc omnis, quam cernis, inops inhumataque turba est :
Centum errant annos, volitantque hæc litora circum :
Tum demùm admissi stagna exoptata revisunt.*

Æn. lib. vi. 325, et seq.

† Virgil calls suicide innocent :

- - - - - *Qui sibi letum*

Insontes peperere manu.

Ib. 434.

Why, then, does he punish the suicide?

‡ They had been judged by Minos, who is said to have inspected their lives and their crimes. *Vitasque et crimina discit. Æn. vi. 433.* What were their crimes? Bayle exclaims against the injustice with which the poet consigns these unoffending shades to a place of punishment. *Repons. aux Quest. d'un Provin. ch. xxii.* The region is described as resounding with the cries of lamentation and sorrow.

justice has been peopled the melancholy circuit of the Plains of Mourning. Innocence is there associated, not merely in abode, but in penalty, with guilt. We see the gentle Procris, and the devoted Ariadne, pining and wandering in the groves to which the most infamous of their sex had been condemned; and no difference appears to have been made in the allotment decreed to the hideous crimes of the last, and to the generous and distinguished virtues of the first*.

The field of warriors does as little credit to the fancy which conceived it. The "chieftains of Greece," and the phalanxes of Agamemnon, and the brave "Dardanidæ," have performed their deeds of courage in vain. No recompence is conferred upon their toils and valour. They have dwindled into shades subject to all the emotions of alarm or sorrow. Some, at the approach of Æneas, utter unfinished exclamations of terror, and flee†. Others stand around him in cold and languid silence; and of others it would appear that their former wounds had not been closed by death, nor their mangled or mutilated limbs restored‡.

*Continuò auditæ voces, vagitus et ingens,
Infantumque animæ fientes in limine primo.*

Æn. lib. vi. l. 426, & seq.

* *His Phædræ Procrinque locis, mœstamque Eryphylen
Evadnenque, et Pasiphaën.* *Ib. 445.*

† - - - Pars vertere terga.

- - - - - Pars tollere vocem

Exiguam: inceptus clamor frustratur hiantes. *Ib. 500.*

‡ *Æn. vi. 501.* A Christian poet has described one of the souls of his purgatory, as still marked with the wounds which had been inflicted on earth; and the magnanimous Manfred is, in this respect, a copy of Deiphobus. *Dante. Purgat. Canto iii.*

In the realms of Tartarus, indeed, poetic justice has been more strictly exercised, and the scene and the sufferers are delineated with the hand of a master. But, in the opposite regions of the blessed, the stream of felicity flows in a dull and scanty current. If the woods and meads be fresh and beautiful, the inhabitants, however distinguished for the piety and virtue of former days, experience, at best, but a reiteration of those pleasures which they had participated on earth. The same appetites which governed the mortal are preserved in the shade. We seek in vain for any intimation of moral or pious improvement. No more exalted knowledge, no more elevated views, no brighter virtues or more purified passions are enjoyed, than had been acquired above. The harp is tuned, the javelin is flung, the horse is managed, the feast is spread; and nothing more remains to be told of the remunerations of Elysium*.

The philosophy of Virgil has mingled with these details, doctrines which were partly borrowed from the schools of Pythagoras and of Plato, and which are often unintelligible and often absurd. His shades, though visible to the eye, are impalpable to the touch†. They are unearthly forms, with earthly organs and appetites. They perfectly resemble the bodies with which they had been formerly clothed, and display the same character, and are governed by the same affections, which had distinguished them

* Appendix, Note E. E. E.

† *Ter conatus ibi collo dare brachia circum;
Ter frustra comprehensa manus effugit imago,
Par levibus ventis, volucrique simillima somno.*

Æn. lib. vi. l. 700.

He borrowed the doctrine from Homer. *Odyss. lib. xi.*

on earth. Of this shadowy population all are not doomed to a perpetual residence in the region of the dead. They who have been condemned to the miseries of Tartarus, may have no change of destiny to hope*. But the other and less criminal ghosts, some suspended aloft and exposed to the penetrating and parching winds, some plunged in purifying fires, or whelmed and tortured in the gulfs of angry torrents, are to be prepared, by this purgation of punishment, for an admission to the joyful fields of Elysium†; and the inhabitants of Elysium themselves, after the lapse of a thousand years, are to be conducted to the stream of Lethe, and, having drank of the oblivious flood, to return to earth, and to commence, we are not told for what cause, or for what end, a long series of painful transmigration through various forms of corporeal being‡.

Such is the future state described, with so much pomp and beauty of language, by the master poet of Rome. In splendour of imagery, in vividness and

* - - - Sedet, æternùmque sedebit

In felix Theseus. - -

Æn. vi. l. 617.

† Non tamen omne malum miseriis, nec funditùs omnes
Corporeæ excedunt pestes; penitùsque necesse est
Multa diu concreta modis inolescere miris.

Ergo exercentur pœnia, veterumque malorum
Supplicias expendunt. Aliæ panduntur inanes
Suspensæ ad ventos - - -

- - - - - Exinde per amplum

Mittimur Elysium, et pauci læta arva tenemus.

Ib. 736.

‡ Has omnes, ubi mille rotam volvere per annos,
Lethæum ad fluvium Deus evocat agmine magno:
Scilicet immemores supera ut convexa revisant,
Rursùs et incipiant in corpora velle reverti.

Ib. 748.

variety of fiction, in grandeur, boldness, and awfulness of scenery, in force of contrast, and felicity of colouring, it cannot be surpassed; and it may justly disdain a comparison with the finest passages in the *Evocation* of Homer, or in the *Elysium* of Pindar, of Claudian, or of Catullus. Yet from the views which have been thus disclosed of the state of the dead, I know not what high and generous hope, or what salutary consideration, could have been reasonably derived. The fears of death could scarcely be subdued or solaced, or the perseverance and fortitude of virtue encouraged, by the promise of pleasures which could not silence the complaints of the Shades who had experienced them. The regulation of life could not be much affected by a reliance on the equity of that tribunal which was described as, in so many instances, unwise and unjust. And the religious convictions of men must have been equally feeble and vague, which had no foundation to rest upon, but a fiction so imperfect in a moral view, so wild and extravagant in poetic exaggerations, and so incredible or inadequate in the rewards and punishments which it enuntiates*.

III. Having thus exhibited the future state of the poets, let us advert to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, as maintained by the Philosophers of Greece and Italy.

* It was indeed rejected with great contempt, not merely by the philosopher but by the plebeian. Cicero has acknowledged the pernicious effects of its absurdity on public belief; and Juvenal speaks with indignation of the scepticism which it had promoted:

Esse aliquot Manes, et subterranea regna
 Et contum, et Stygio ramos in gurgite nigras,
 Atque una transire vadum tot millia cymba
 Nec pueri credunt.

Sat. ii. 149.

By every one who has studied the spirit of Greek and Roman literature, the disregard or indifference must have been noticed, with which many of the most accomplished scholars of those nations contemplated futurity. Not only were the darkness and uncertainty which rested on the subject openly acknowledged, but the doctrine itself was sometimes treated with levity and derision. It seemed to be the object of the learned rather to frame systems, than to diffuse or discover truth; and the philosopher, having exercised his fancy in forming a new and striking theory, and given a scholastic form to fantastic speculations, rested satisfied with the boldness or singularity of his work; and was better pleased to surprise his auditors by his subtlety and his sophistry, than to enlighten or instruct them by his experience or his wisdom.

Various were the conflicting opinions which the antagonistic metaphysicians of antiquity maintained on the attributes of the soul. They were, almost uniformly, visionary and adventurous, yet they were sustained with a vigor and perseverance which nothing could subdue or tire. Some affirmed that the soul was not separated from the body by death, and that both perished at the same moment. Others asserted the contrary doctrine, but differed widely and wildly as to the mode of distinct existence; and, while one school believed that the soul was to be finally dissipated in the air, another affirmed that it was to exist but for a certain period, and a third, that it was to subsist for ever*.

* *Sunt qui discessum animi a corpore putent esse mortem. Sunt qui nullum censeant fieri discessum, sed una animum et corpus ex-cidere, animumque in corpore extingui. Qui discedere animum*

What was the nature of this soul, and what its origin, were questions eternally discussed, and with similar discrepancy, by the sages of Greece. At one moment the soul was nothing more than the heart, the blood, a portion of the brain, a particle of air, an organization of fire; at another, it was harmony, number, nothing, a quintessence without a name, a movement without end and without beginning, an *πτελιχμα*, or a fifth element, which they who framed and introduced the term were unable to define or to comprehend*.

The learned industry of Cicero has collected and stated these hostile or whimsical tenets. But the academician, true to the spirit of his school, neither affirms nor rejects them. He labours through the detail with grave and philosophic accuracy, and, when he completes his enumeration, he coolly and coldly exclaims, "Which of these doctrines is true, "a God only can decide; which is most probable, "is a question of scarcely inferior difficulty †."

But he readily admits the tendency of these opinions, and the inferences to which they lead. If the soul be a portion of the body, it shall perish with the body; if it be air, it shall be dissipated; if fire, extinguished; if harmony, dissolved; according to all these doctrines, sentiment and perception expire with life, and man has no concern beyond the grave ‡;

censent, alii statim dissipari; alii diu permanere; alii semper. Cicer. Tusc. Disputat. lib. i. § 9.

* Appendix, Note F. F. F.

† Harum sententiarum quæ vera sit, Deus aliquis viderit; quæ vero simillima, magna quæstio est. Tusc. Disp. i. § 11.

‡ Nam si cor, aut sanguis, aut cerebrum est animus, certe, quoniam est corpus, interibit cum reliquo corpore; si anima est fortasse, dissipabitur; si ignis, extinguetur; si est harmonia, dissolvetur.

or, in other words, the same conclusion is to be deduced from the different theories of the philosophers; and the definitions and reasonings of the schools terminate in a dogma from which our nature and our reason equally revolt.

But, if we advert more particularly to the doctrines of the wise and contemplative Pythagoras, and the sublime and eloquent Plato, we may discover absurdities yet greater than these, and be enabled to form a more accurate idea of the wildering and wildered spirit of antient metaphysics. According to the first of those illustrious characters, the soul, which is a portion of divinity, and participated by men in common with brutes*, experiences in death, not an extinction of its being, nor a translation to a higher and happier state of existence, but merely a variation in its corporeal residence. Dismissed from one body, it issues forth only to occupy another. Sometimes, in the circle of its migrations, it passes from the form of a brute to that of man, sometimes from the form of man to that of a brute†. The crimes and propen-

Quid de Dicæarcho dicam, qui nihil omnino animum dicat esse? His sentiētiis omnibus nihil post mortem pertinere ad quenquam potest: pariter enim cum vitâ sensus amittitur. Non sentiētiis autem, nihil est, ullam in partem quod intersit. *Tuscul. Disput. lib. i. § 11.*

* The sole distinction, according to Pythagoras, between the human and brute soul, arises from the different temperament of the body of the brute and the man. *Lactant. l. viii. § 28.*

† Morte carent animæ; semperque priore relicta
Sede, novis domibus habitant, vivuntque receptæ.
- - - - - et quoslibet occupat artus
Spiritus, eque feris humana in corpora transit,
Inque feras noxæ. *Ovid. Metamorph. lib. xi. v. 158.*

The language of the poet embellishes the doctrine which the philosopher probably derived from the mysterious rhapsodies of the

sities which it had perpetrated or pampered in one body, are to determine its succeeding migration to another. That which is ferocious in man to-day, shall kindle in the ferocity of the wolf or tiger to-morrow. The soul of the robber shall in due time actuate the fox; and the gluttony which has been indulged in the human shape, shall be sent to grovel and wallow in the swine*. By these trials, the stains of pollution shall be effectually, though slowly, purged away. The necessity of further migration shall then cease; and the soul, after so many wanderings and so many probations, shall be prepared for, and shall enjoy, an eternal readmission to the parent source from which it had flowed.

Of such tenets the extravagance and absurdity are sufficiently obvious. To punish and correct the evil propensities of the past, the soul is dismissed to the very form in which those propensities are again to be exercised and indulged. From playing the tyrant among men, it is to migrate to the beast of prey, to play the tyrant among brutes. The dominant and peccant appetite, instead of being purified by the change, is to be fomented by the continued gratification of its vilest tendencies; and that which was designed to defecate the stream, and to purify it for a re-union with its original and perfect fount, is to

priests of Ægypt. Herodot. lib. ii. c. 123. Diodor. Sicul. apud Euseb. x. c. 8.

- * *Exæquat damnum meritis, et muta ferarum
Cogit vincta pati: truculentos ingerit ursis,
Predonesque lupis; fallaces vulpibus addit.
At qui desidïa semper vineque gravatus
Indulgens veneri, voluit torpescere luxu,
Hunc suis immundi pingues detrudit in artus.*

Claud. In Ruf. lib. ii.

render it, as it flows in the channel of migration, only more turbid and more impure.

And the soul, which is to be so chastised and disciplined, is an imperishable portion of the divine mind. What follows? This portion of the divine nature, in the form of Sardanapalus, passes for its purification into the form of a swine; and God, in this particle of himself, is to wallow in the impurity of the swine, for the sins of which he had been guilty in the intemperance of Sardanapalus.

This is not the only extravagance involved in the doctrine of Pythagoras. Is the soul, after it has emanated from its parent source, deprived of its divine character? Then the divine character is lost in a portion of divinity. Does it, on the contrary, preserve its original nature? Then the subsequent misery and pollution of the soul, are but the pollution and misery of a portion of Deity, and God is diffused abroad, to be at once tainted by sin, and corrected by punishment. "*Quid infelicius credi potest,*" says the venerable Austin, "*quam Dei partem vapulare cum puer vapulat? Jam vero partes Dei fieri lascivas, iniquas, impias, atque omnino damnabiles, quis ferri potest nisi prorsus insanit*?*"

Plato, the Homer of philosophers, has lauded and embraced all the absurdities of this extravagant Metempsychosis. He taught, like Pythagoras, that the soul was but an emanation from Divinity; that it was to be tainted by passion and by crime; that it was to be purified by trial and by punishment; and that it was to migrate from one human form to another, till it should be restored to its original perfection, and thus prepared to be finally reabsorbed into the

* De Civitat. Dei.

divine nature. In the avowal of these opinions he is adventurous, mysterious, and not, unfrequently, absurd; and we cannot, without regret, behold the light of Greece wasting its splendours on the wild and shadowy phantoms, of which, in the foolishness of their wisdom, the sect of Crotona were so early and so deeply enamoured.

When the Master of the Academy more particularly discusses the nature of the soul, he becomes involved in a labyrinth of profound and mysterious reverie. The soul, though an emanation from God, is, as he states, a compound being, consisting of three parts, each of which occupies its separate habitation in the human form. The first is reason, which, in consideration of its pre-eminence, is stationed, as in a watch-tower, in the lofty compartment of the brain. The next is passion, which occupies and rules the region of the heart. The last is desire, which takes up its humbler dwelling in the inferior portions of the body*. This triple spirit, this complex particle of the divine nature, is not long to retain its original purity. It is to be speedily reached and degraded by earthly influences, to be governed by new and evil tendencies, to be vitiated and enfeebled by sin in all its faculties, and to be condemned to inhabit, as so many sepulchres or prisons, a long succession of mortal bodies; and then only, when it shall be purified, by such probation, from all terrestrial stain, and shall learn to soar above the regions of sense to the brightness and beauty of the intellectual

* Let me sustain myself by the authority of Cicero. *Plato finxit triplicem animam, cujus principatum, id est, rationem, in capite, sicut in arce, posuit, et duas partes seperare voluit, iram et cupiditatem, quas locis disclusit, iram in pectore, cupiditatem subter præcordia locavit. Disputat. lib. i. § 10.*

world; shall it regain the glory, the freedom, and the happiness, which it had lost, and be finally reabsorbed by the divinity to which it belongs, and from which it issued*.

The soul, then, is a union of three powers, separate in their offices, and divided in their residence; a compound of three directing influences which operate and exist apart from each other, and in regions appropriated to their individual tendencies. This union, or this compound, so distinct in the locality and object of its parts, is clothed, nevertheless, with an *ἔλημα*, or material vehicle, by which, instead of being impeded in its movements, it is to be rendered more efficient in the performance of its important and diversified functions. But, when the philosopher proceeds further, and endeavours to discuss the causes by which the soul, so perfect in its origin, is corrupted on its emanation, and sown with such abundant seeds of moral evil and intellectual depravity, he evidently labours under the abstractions of his metaphysics, and becomes as dark and incomprehensible, as the darkest and most incomprehensible of the dreaming disciples of Rhamus, Boehmen, and the angelic Aquinas.

The doctrines, however, which he advocates with such strenuous eloquence, he does not always maintain, and seems, sometimes, to forget. He exercises all the dexterity of his logic to prove that the substance which is distinguished by the inherent power of self-movement, must be an unoriginated and eternal being, and that the soul, being possessed of that principle, is, consequently, eternal and unoriginated. Accordingly, he ascribes to the soul, with unhesitat-

* Plato, *Timæ.* et *Phæd.*

ing confidence, as well an anterior as posterior eternity; and that which, in one page, is a portion of Divinity, a beam to be finally reabsorbed in the sun from which it flowed, a drop of an infinite ocean, to which, after many wanderings, it is at last to return, becomes, in another, a distinct and individual existence, deriving its being from no extrinsic source, immortal in its ungenerated and inalienable attributes, and equally without beginning and without end*.

I mean not to deny to Plato the first rank in the catalogue of uninspired writers. Often, indeed, does he communicate the most interesting and elevating truths, and exercise all the dominion of unresisted persuasion over his disciples. When he expatiates, especially, on the dignity of the soul, on its lofty and surpassing powers, and on all those capabilities, and capacities, and attributes, which, as he affirms, imply an immortal existence, he impresses on the mind of his hearers what appear to be his own generous and noble convictions; and he rises, if possible, still higher, when he discloses the glories of that state which shall be allotted to recompense the toils, the trials, and the triumphs of virtue. But the eagle, who is beheld for a moment soaring in the brightness of heaven, and excelling in the power of his flight, suddenly closes his mighty wings, and descends, and is lost, among the mists, and fogs, and darkness, which gather and thicken below. The most sublime conceptions, adorned with the imagery of the poet, and unfolded with the spirit of the philosopher, have been scarcely uttered, when they are succeeded and counteracted by thick swarming fan-

* Appendix, Note G. G. G.

cies, more wild and mystical than the wildest and most mystical enunciations of the Sybil. - Light and darkness follow each other with rapid alternation; and a humiliating but instructive example is afforded in the same person, and almost at the same moment, of the power and feebleness, the affluence and the penury, the ignorance and the wisdom, which blend with, and characterize, the attainments of one of the most distinguished and exalted of mankind.

From the contemplative and enthusiastic Plato, we turn to Socrates. Of all the philosophers of the Grecian schools, he is most distinguished for good sense and sober reason. Instead of entangling himself in metaphysical discussions, he uttered, with unambitious simplicity, what he conceived to be true; and, instead of seeking truth in the clouds and darkness of abstraction, he sought and found her in the region of calm and unimpassioned inquiry. It may be justly supposed that he disdained the tales of Tartarus and of Elysium; and he occasionally speaks of the blessings to be conferred hereafter on the upright, almost with the spirit of a Christian Apostle. Yet, even in this best and wisest of the Gentiles, we speedily discover the traces of human infirmity. The noble confidence with which, in his better moments, he announces the doctrine of a future state, often declines into a wavering and fluctuating diffidence. In the genuine spirit of academic uncertainty, he perpetually vibrates between decision and doubt; and the speech which, according to Plato, he addressed to the iniquitous judges by whom he had been condemned, affords, at once, a distinguished evidence, of his self command and pre-eminence powers, and a direct and afflicting testimony of the

hesitating faith with which he had embraced the tenet of the immortality of the soul.

It may, now, upon the whole, be reasonably affirmed, that, on the subject of a future state, the Greeks and Romans derived very imperfect lights either from their religion or their philosophy. All "saw through a glass darkly." They who most affected to despise the vulgar superstition, were themselves involved in fallacies and errors equally gross*; and the people, unable to comprehend the dogmas of the schools, and to follow their masters through the mazes of obscure or conflicting speculations, had nothing left but to abide by the more intelligible, and perhaps, more instructive, fables of their poets, and to draw their motives of fear and hope from the often repeated tales of Tartarean lakes, and Elysian bowers.

Of the absurdities and fictions which thus darkened the most solemn of all truths, it is not difficult, even now, to trace the consequences. The doctrine of a future state was scarcely regarded among the most devout polytheists of Greece and Rome as a fundamental article of faith. In their addresses to the gods, men expressed their marked anxiety for temporal happiness, but betrayed little solicitude

* The philosophical writings of Cicero, and especially the first book of the *Tusculan Disputations*, the *Treatise de Senectute*, and the *Somnium Scipionis*, exhibit, in the most beautiful language, the errors, the wanderings, and the ignorance of the most eminent of the ancient philosophers, on the great subject of the immortality of the soul; and afford an interesting, though not perfect, view of all that the penetrating subtilty of the Greek, and the grave wisdom of the Roman, had suggested on that important topic.

concerning another world*. On some occasions, the tenet of future reward and punishment was decried and disavowed; and at the bar, and in the senate, of Rome, orators and statesmen of the highest character and station, "were not apprehensive of giving offence to their hearers, by exposing that doctrine as an idle and extravagant opinion which was rejected with contempt by every man of a liberal education and understanding†."

* If the Roman Satirists have justly expressed the sentiments of the multitude, the religious invocations of men were of a very earthly character. Hor. Epist. lib. i. ep. 16. Juven. Satyr. xiii. Persius. Sat. ii.

† I quote an historian who has admitted his admiration of "the elegant mythology" of Greece and Rome. Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ch. xv. The mischief which he has acknowledged, he did not, and was not inclined to, exaggerate. See also Cicero pro Cluent. c. 61. Sallust de Bell. Cat. c. 50. Juven. Satyr. ii. 149. Tuscul Disput. l. i. c. 21.

Strabo speaks, with equal contempt, of the fables of the Bramin and of Plato, on the subject of a future state. Seneca, de Consolat. c. xix., et Trod. Act ii., avows the opinion, that, "mors omnium dolorum et solutio et finis est;" and that, "post mortem nihil est, ipsaque mors nihil." And Pliny, Hist. Nat. lib. vii. c. 56, does not hesitate to affirm the same doctrine. Yet, on other occasions, these writers appeared to admit the immortality of the soul, with an inconsistency which demonstrates how difficult it is wholly to extinguish what some have denominated the instinctive persuasion of human nature.

SECT. II.

Braminical doctrines on the nature of the soul—Responsibility and immortality of man—Rewards and punishments—Purifying migrations—Divine natures subject to them like human—Gods liable to lapse as well as men—Incidental and temporary enjoyment of heaven, without the penalty of migration—The allotment of the Yogee—His future purgations—The degrees of vice and virtue—Proportional migration—Description—The Bagohat Geeta—The Shasta—The frightful tenets which they inculcate—Means of securing future felicity—The whole system incredible and absurd.

ON almost all the subjects of physical and metaphysical science, the learned Bramins have displayed great perseverance of inquiry, and great acuteness of deduction. In discussing the nature and origin of the human soul, they have exercised equal industry and ingenuity. They clearly asserted, in their theories, the essential difference between matter and mind, and have discussed the distinctive properties of both with all the acuteness of the Grecian schools. That their speculations involved them in many erroneous and wild conjectures, and were marked by bold and dangerous fallacies, will not be denied; but it will be as readily admitted, that they frequently discovered, in their reasonings, a depth of thought, and a quickness of discernment, which entitled them to a high place in the catalogue of the most distinguished philosophers.

Judging from some of those inquiries, we might imagine that the Hindû sage had sown the seeds of those metaphysical speculations which afterwards ripened, and bore their fruits, such as they were, beneath the uncertain beams of Athenian schools. From "The Compendium of Philosophy,"* from

* By Abul Fazel. See also Ayeen Akberry. vol. iii. p. 95.

the abstract and profound discussions of the Shaster*, and from innumerable passages in the astonishing poem of the Bagvhat-Geeta, it is evident that the sagacity of the Bramin had early engaged in the discussions which subsequently occupied the Academy and the Lyceum; and the philosophy, it is certain, was first cultivated in the East, which, afterwards, from Plato to Berkley, rejected in the West the existence or reality of material nature, and asserted the sole reality of the ideal world †.

If the Bramin, in these abstractions, was often led to false and extravagant conclusions, he was often rewarded by the discovery of useful truth. Many just ideas were acquired of the dignity and destiny of the human soul; and the sublime description in the Mahabarat, may serve as an evidence of the high and early attainments of the more learned Hindu, in the science of mind. "Some," it is said, "regard the soul as a wonder, others hear of it with astonishment, but no one knoweth it. The weapon divideth it not; the fire burneth it not; the water corrupteth it not; the wind drieth it not away; for it is indivisible, inconsumable, and incorruptible; it is eternal, universal, permanent, immovable; it is invisible, unalterable, and inconceivable ‡."

What was supposed to be thus dignified in its nature, was pronounced, with the same energy, to be responsible in its character. By all the sacred books of the Hindu, a heaven and hell, the scene of eternal recompence and retribution, were uniformly

* Dow, Dissertat. prefixed to his Translation of part of the Shaster.

† Dow, Dissertat. p. 57. Ayeen Akberry, vol. iii. p. 128.

‡ Bagvhat-Geeta, p. 37.

and explicitly announced. The doctrine was authoritatively communicated to the people, as confirmed alike by the deductions of reason, and the voice of religion. It was a truth which the inspiration of the gods had unerringly proclaimed, and the faith of men universally embraced; and that which was thus sanctioned by the authority of the philosopher, the priest, and the god, was readily and piously received by the docility and reverence of the ignorant multitude.

If, however, the immortality and responsibility of the soul were forcibly proclaimed in the East, the modes of recompence and retribution were described with almost inconceivable extravagance. Imagination was, here, permitted to indulge in details and fictions, which might have suited the temper of popular credulity, but would have justly repelled a less facile and submissive faith. These wild descriptions found a place in the gravest pages, and were unsparingly blended with the wisest institutions of theologians, of statesmen, and of legislators, and with precepts and doctrines of the most sublime and salutary character. The frail inventions of human folly were justified by the sanction of the gods themselves. They were solemnly affirmed by Krishnu in his address to Arjoon*; and the mighty Brama often condescended to repeat them to the priest, who was to repeat them to the people.

The scale of reward and punishment which was thus formed by gods or men, included the pains, the trials, and the purifications, of the Metempsychosis. The souls of men, which, according to one system of the Bramin, were but so many rays from the infinite

* Dialogue of Krishnu and Arjoon, in the Bagvhat-Geeta.

spirit, destined, at the appointed period, to be reabsorbed in their original essence*, were fated to undergo a series of migrations, through a period extended or limited, in proportion to the pollutions to be expiated and purified. The nature of these migrations is formally and solemnly stated; and the extravagance of the doctrine is heightened by the superstitious minuteness and precision with which it is explained.

The purifications of sin by diversity of migration, was not to be reserved solely for men. The deities themselves were to be occasionally subjected to fresh purgation. As if they were liable in heaven to the taint of corruption, the probationary punishments were detailed which their pollution might require. They were not only to descend from their high sphere into earthly bodies, but to endure the evils to which earthly bodies are exposed, and to preserve, when restored to felicity, the consciousness of the sufferings to which they have been consigned. "But thou and I," says Krishnu to Arjoon, "have passed through many forms. Mine are known to me. Thou knowest not thine†."

If the gods, in their region of felicity, might lapse into crime; man, having obtained beatitude by suffering and reformation, might yet forfeit it by a return to the depravities of the earth. He was exposed, even in his state of blessedness, to temptation, to passion, and to pollution; and, if tainted by corruption, he was to be cast out, for a certain period, from his ethereal residence; and to be sent back from one

* Isavasyam, from the Yajur Veda. Sir William Jones' *Verba*, vol. xiii. pp. 375, 7.

† Bagvhat-Gita, p. 51.

mortal frame to another, till he should be again purified for the enjoyment of the society of heaven*.

By some texts of the Braminical scriptures, it seems to be announced that the human soul might require sufficient purity to merit the enjoyments of Eendra, without enduring the probations of previous transmigration. It is affirmed that the priest, "whether he perform any other religious act or not, may acquire indubitable felicity, by the solemn repetition of the Gayatri †;" that the teacher of the Veda shall secure, to himself, the world of Brama, to his father, the world of the sun, and to his female relatives, the world of celestial nymphs; that he who daily repeats the sacred text Om, for three years, without neglect, shall, hereafter, approach the divine Essence; and that supreme beatitude is to be obtained by due offerings to the gods and the manes, by procreation of children, by the five great sacraments, by the resignation of patience, and by the good deeds of charity. But these opinions are not proclaimed in opposition to the doctrine of migration. Certain virtues may diminish the rigour, but cannot remove the necessity, of trial. The same lawgiver who has announced the efficacy of acts of real or imaginary holiness, has proclaimed the necessity of a long series of purifying transmigration; and the wise and inspired Menu repeatedly declares that the soul, until tried by suffering, in various forms, cannot be permitted to share the delights of a pure and ethereal being ‡.

* Heetopades. Sir William Jones' Works, vol. xiii. p. 268.

† A text of the Vedas.

‡ Laws of Menu. Sir William Jones' Works. vol. vii. pp. 28, 135, 231, 241.

Some, indeed, may obtain a partial and momentary enjoyment of heaven, without being subject to the penalties of previous migration. He whose devotions have been suddenly interrupted by death, or who may have been hurried from his present abode before he could accomplish the penances and mortifications which he had prescribed to himself, shall not, therefore, be excluded from the celestial feasts. For what he may have done he shall have his recompence ; but his recompence shall be transitory, in proportion as his works have been imperfect ; and he shall be sent back to earth, “ and be
 “ born again in some sacred family, and, perhaps,
 “ in the house of some learned and inspired Yogee.
 “ In this state he shall commence a long course of
 “ migratory probation ; and he shall then only ascend
 “ to the superior abode, when he shall have completed the allotted number of his trials, and be
 “ perfected, by many births, in the purity and holiness of his nature *.”

According to the inspired Menu, there is a three-fold nature in crime ; and, consequently, a three-fold punishment to be endured. The most guilty are justly condemned to abide, for an allotted period, in the forms of snakes, shekels, insects, worms, and inferior beasts. The guilty, in the next degree, are doomed to migrate into the forms of elephants, lions, tigers, or boars. And crime less immersed in pollution, is to occupy the bodies of dancers, singers, wrestlers, actors, gamblers, and cudgel-players. These transmigrations may continue for many ages ; but they are essentially necessary to the final purification of the soul, and to its final felicity †.

* Bagvhat-Geeta, pp. 67, 75.

† Laws of Menu, ch. xii. Sir William Jones' Works. vol. viii. p. 130.

There is also a three-fold nature in the holiness of virtue, to each of which are allotted appropriate transmigrations. "The lowest state of virtue is that of hermits, religious mendicants, such orders of demigods as are drawn in ærial cars, genii of the signs of the lunar mansion, and Daityas, or the offspring of Diti. Holy sapi, Deities of the lower heaven, Genii of the Vedas, Regents of the stars, Divinities of years, are the middle forms to which spirits moderately endued, shall be conveyed. And Brama with four faces, the Genius of Virtue, the Power presiding over the two principles of nature, the Mighty and Unperceived, are the highest state to which the most perfect purity may exalt the soul*."

To this system, however, the religion of the Hindu does not always adhere; and the divine Krishnu, in his interminable oration in the Mahabarat, propounds a different theory of rewards and punishment.

"There are two destinies," says the god, "the good and the evil. The first is for Mocksh, or for a final absorption in the divine nature, and is reserved for those who are acquainted with Brama, and shall depart this life in the fiery light of day, in the bright season of the moon, or within six months of the sun's northern course." The second is for the wicked, "those who are not to be satisfied, who are hypocrites, and who are overwhelmed in madness and intoxication. They shall be incarcerated in the wombs of evil spirits, and unclean beasts, and transferred from form to form till they shall pass to the mansions of the infernal regions. In those abodes they shall

* Laws of Menu, ch. xii. Sir William Jones' Works. vol viii. p. 130.

“ suffer the chastisement due to their delinquency ;
“ and from thence, after ages of trial and suffering
“ shall have elapsed, they shall be sent to occupy
“ new bodies, and thus afforded the means or oppor-
“ tunity of subduing the evil destiny, and meriting
“ the good *.”

To this whimsical tale of indispensable probation, the Mahabarat adds several minute but equally wild descriptions of the future migrations to be endured by departed souls. Before the spirit of man can be reunited with that of God, which is a final exemption from mortal births, it must, as we are told, according to its degree of holiness or of impurity, pass through the immeasurable regions of the seven ascending and descending spheres. The ascending spheres are scenes of progressive remuneration, where holy men, who have exhausted their days in solitude and in penance, are to enjoy felicity in the society of each other, and to complete the purifications which are to terminate their trials by perfecting their sanctity. The descending spheres are the scenes of augmenting punishment. They are abodes of woe, regions of darkness, the dwelling-place of serpents ; and, there, shall the cruel, the oppressive, and the impenitent, be disciplined by trials proportioned to their crimes, and necessary to their purification †.

* Bagvhat-Geeta. pp. 115, 116, 117.

† Holwel. Feasts and Fasts of the Gentoos. The Baghvath-Geeta in the same manner describes the spheres as scenes of temporary abode. There is a series of Hindu paintings in the royal library at Paris, on various subjects of Indian mythology. In one of those paintings the souls of men are represented either rising in the ascending, or sinking in the descending, spheres, according to the doctrine here stated.

The theory of these migratory purifications is fully detailed in the sacred books of the Shasta. The deity, it is said, having resolved to impart a portion of the excellence of his nature to beings capable of participating his beatitude, and administering to his glory, formed, from his own essence, an angelic host, of diversity of ranks and privileges, but all equally endowed with liberty of will. These spirits, whom he denominated Debtah, worshipped round his throne; and the Eternal One rejoiced in his new creation, and, there was harmony in heaven. But, after "an infinite extension and duration of time," envy and jealousy began to prevail among the leaders of the angelic bands; and a great part of the heavenly host were gradually seduced from allegiance to their Creator. Sorrow was, then, for the first time, to pollute the regions of beatitude; and it was decreed that the Insurgents should be driven forth from the firmament, and plunged into the eternal darkness, and subjected to the penal woes, of Onderah.

There was yet, however, mercy in heaven; and the Eternal One said unto Bishnoo, "I will prepare bodies for the reception of the rebellious Debtah, which shall be subject to decay, to death, and to renovation; and those Debtah, for their punishment and purgation, shall undergo, in succession, eighty-seven changes of transmigration. And if they shall benefit by trial, and do good, and repent, and their sins be purged away, thou Bishnoo shalt receive them into thy bosom, and convey them to the highest region of purification. But if, on the contrary, they shall continue in sin, and refuse to avail themselves of my mercy, they shall return for a space to the gloomy sojourn of Ondera, and from thence, after long endurance,

“ they shall be reconducted to the lowest Boboon of
“ punishment, and commence a new trial for the
“ restoration of their sanctity and their beatitude.
“ Moreover, thou Bishnoo shalt preserve the seven
“ Boboons of purification, until the Debtah, bene-
“ fitting by my compassion, shall be purified from
“ their pollutions, and restored to my presence ;
“ and, when my decree shall be thus accomplished,
“ thou shalt then destroy the seven Boboons of
“ purification, and they shall be no more.”

In consequence of this decree, a new creation of visible and invisible worlds attested the power of the Deity. Fifteen regions, seven above, and seven below, this terraqueous globe, contained the forms of all degrees and shapes, in which the Debtah were to be successively imprisoned, and through which they were to complete the determined series of transmigration. The penultimate form to be inhabited by these spirits was that of the cow ; the last, that of man ; and, according to their purity, after they had experienced so many trials, they were either to be released from future suffering, or to be subjected to a new series of punishments and of migrations*.

The beautiful and ancient drama of Sacontala contains many passages which advert to the essential doctrines of this singular system. In the Geeta we are told of the inferior heaven of Eendra ; the Sacontala speaks of the superior heaven, the central place of the omnipotent Vishnu, to which the purified soul shall be exalted for reunion with Divinity. But man must be first tried in the furnace. The

* Holwel. Translat. of a portion of the Shâsta, in his Feasts and Fasts of the Gentoos.

dross of his vices must be removed by the refining fires of successive migrations; and one of the personages of the drama, admitting with due faith the necessity of these purifying trials, addresses Seeva "the goddess beautiful with her azure neck and red locks, eternally potent and self existing," in the humble hope that, having already completed his circle of probation, "he might be spared the pain of another birth in this perishing world of crime and sorrow *."

The votary, it is true, is instructed in the means by which he may diminish the number of his trials, and accelerate his ascension to felicity. But what are the means? Acts of virtue? Piety and prayer? Self denial and humiliation, and the holy discipline of the passions and the will? No. He must fast. He must count over his beads. He must mortify his flesh. "He must make offerings, to the priests, of golden horses, and vine trees of gold, and chariots to which elephants and horses of the same precious metal are yoked †." But, above all, he must abstract his mind from all earthly concerns, renounce the world, become insensible to whatever it contains whether of good or of evil, perpetually fix his eyes on one object ‡, and, retiring from the associations of his fellow creatures, "feed on the balmy air in forests blooming with trees of beauty, purify himself in rills dyed yellow with the golden dust of the lotos, fortify his spirit in the mysterious bath, meditate in caverns of which the pebbles are

* *Sacontala*, pp. 55, 97, 98.

† *Ayeen Akberry*, vol. iii. p. 229. *Tavernier*, lib. i. c. 2.

‡ The *Geeta* says, "on the point of his nose," lest the view of external objects should disturb his meditations.

“ unblemished gems, and be heedless and undisturbed, even though nymphs of exquisite beauty encompass him with temptation, and exercise upon him all the arts and blandishments of seduction *.”

In this manner has the Bramin mingled in the pages of his sacred volumes, the tenets of absurdity with the tales of extravagance. We look for a doctrine which, in its simple and explicit avowal, would have been consistent with the universal persuasion of mankind, and equally salutary in its moral and religious tendency; and we find only dogmas disgraced by the miserable fables in which they are conveyed, and wrought into a system of multiplied Boboons, of lapsed Intelligences, and of final absorption in the divine essence, which infinitely transcends, in wildness and in folly, every other romance of Eastern imagination. Of such a scheme no commentary can explain away the absurdity or the extravagance. If the criminal can credit what is incredible, and crowd into his belief so many horrors of woe and punishment, he may indeed tremble for his sins, and reform, from terror, the life which should be regulated by duty. But what consolation, what encouragement, what hope, can be found in doctrines which doom the soul to eighty-seven migrations, often, perhaps, to be renewed, and, at best, to be completed only by ages of endurance in forms slowly ascending from the reptile to the man? Or what ideas can men permit themselves to entertain of a Divinity, who, first forming innumerable spirits of his own essence, subsequently frames the universe for the punishment of their delinquency; and whose

* Bagvhat-Geeta. p. 87.

wisdom has found no mode of reuniting to himself so many particles of his nature corrupted in the delinquent Debtah, but by the extravagant instrumentality of ascending and descending spheres, of purifying wanderings through so many forms, and of centuries of punishment which, it might be thought, nothing but omnipotent malignity could imagine or decree?

From tales like these, often contradictory, and always wild, little can be learned for the moral or intellectual improvement of man. Superstition may study them and tremble, and they may confirm the religious slavery, by exciting the religious terrors, of the people. But they afford no strength to genuine virtue, no support to human affliction, and no foundation for rational faith. They thicken the glooms of approaching death, while they announce to the expiring sufferer a long continuance of migratory trial, and a distant heaven, to be lost, perhaps, by new crimes, inducing the necessity of new purgations. Of the nature and attributes of God, they inculcate only the most false and mischievous notions; and, with respect to this world and its duties, they afford as little to correct and edify the believer. They are, therefore, useless or pernicious to mankind; and may be considered, as the most monstrous inventions of priestly enthusiasm or fraud, and as the most ludicrous and cumbrous appendages of a superstition, contemptible in the estimate of sober reason, and worthy only of the acceptance of the ignorant, the credulous, and the wildered fanatic.

SECT. III.

Future state of the Koran—Views of the day of judgment—Sublime and ludicrous circumstances—Final decree—The passage of the bridge Sirat—The wicked chained to devils—Their sufferings—Paradise—Voluptuously described—Its pearls, rubies, cushions, carpets, rivers of wine, cooling breezes, sensual espousals—Comparison of the future state of Virgil and Mahomet—Mahomet more gorgeous, but more sensual, in his descriptions—Justice and truth sacrificed to the object of his details—The object accomplished in the fanaticism which was inspired.

THE people of Arabia, at the period when Mahomet commenced the labours of his pretended mission, were ignorant and rude. Even in the more polished society of Mecca, little learning and little civilization were to be found; and the surrounding tribes, accustomed to the vagrancy of an unsettled and wandering life, had declined into a deeper and more confirmed barbarity. The wild and romantic scenery of the country, the simple but pleasing incidents of shepherd life, the joys or sufferings of rustic love, or the more striking events of the war of clans, might occasionally inspire the song in hall or bower; but, though the Muse was sometimes heard to cheer the migrations or the poverty of the Arab, almost every other species of literature was unknown; and learning and philosophy were to accompany only the triumphs of Caliphat.

On the great topic of the immortality of the soul, the Arabs were divided into sects, some rejecting, and some modifying, the belief, with equal ignorance and zeal. In the estimate of the few, who affected to soar above the prejudices of the popular faith, the grave was to close the scanty scene of the hopes

and fears of mankind. Others encouraged a less melancholy persuasion ; and death, as they imagined though it might suspend, for a period, the active existence of the soul, was finally to be succeeded by renovation and immortality. Then was to commence a Paradise of sense. The pleasures most eagerly solicited in this life were to be renewed, and to flow in a more copious and unbroken stream. The wants and desires, indeed, of those voluptuous passions which had been felt and pampered on earth, were also to be experienced in the regions of joy ; but imagination was exhausted in describing the various modes by which they were to be gratified ; and human sensuality was so completely indulged in these reveries, that the brute animals who had contributed in one world to the comfort and convenience of man, were assigned to promote the happiness of their masters in another.

To such a people, warm, impassioned, and rude, was Mahomet to address himself. His doctrines were to be accommodated not merely to their uncultivated understandings, but to their senses and passions, their habits and prejudices, their customs and superstitions, their hopes and fears. What policy required, he had inclination and talents to supply. Without entering into any profound disquisition on the modes of future existence, or on the moral and intellectual constitution of a future state, he skilfully adapted his promises of hereafter to the peculiar temper of the times which he addressed. The believer was taught to anticipate a futurity of sure and stable blessedness. The sceptic was invited to contemplate a more clear and distinct prospect of the world beyond the grave, and, thereby, to cheer his infidelity into a brighter and better conviction.

To all was tendered an immortality of unlimited voluptuousness ; and the most sensual of men might have been satisfied with the impure and earthly pleasures which were provided for them in the paradise of the Prophet.

But Mahomet knew too well the influence of fear on the human heart, not to add the terrors of menace to the flattery of promise. He has, therefore, provided a hell for punishment, as he has spread out a paradise for reward. The sinner, deprived of all hope, was taught to contemplate a region where vengeance shall seize upon the criminal, and consign him to an eternity of unmitigated sorrow. The glare of a more hideous Tartarus was seen beyond the grave ; and the retribution which was described by the sublime imagination of the Roman poet, was less horrible and frightful, than the woes prefigured for guilt by the ardent fancy of the Arabian Impostor.

These scenes of future justice, to which we shall hereafter more particularly refer, are to be preceded by the awful events of the day of judgment. That day, according to one text of the Koran, shall include a thousand, according to another, fifty thousand years. " A mighty smoke, horrible to unbelievers, " shall then fall upon the whole earth ; and the " sound of the trumpet shall be heard ; and the " beasts shall be gathered together ; and the seas " shall boil ; and the mountains pass away ; and " the sun be folded up ; and the stars shall fall ; " and the graves be turned upside down ; and the " heavens be cloven in sunder and removed *." While these sublime and terrific occurrences are taking place, the dead shall come forth ; and the

* Koran, chaps. 25, 52, 54, 59, 80, 81, 82.

nations shall be hurried on by the angelic might of "the driver and witness," to receive their final allotment; and the "Summoner," the immortal Israfil, shall call, with irresistible authority, the quick and the dead to the tribunal of judgment; and, finally, the state of the reprobate and of the blessed shall be immutably fixed by the decree of heaven *.

As the period of this decree shall approach, the assembled multitude shall be agitated with consternation and dismay; "for the shock of that hour shall be a terrible thing." Every sentiment which had, hitherto, most predominated in the heart, shall be lost in solicitude and expectation. "Men shall be seen seemingly drunk, but they shall not be really drunk; and every woman who giveth suck shall forget the infant which she suckleth; and every female that is with young shall cast her burden †." The terror, however, shall not be alike for all. If some, smitten by the recollection of their crimes, "shall creep, grovelling with their faces on the ground," and others, whose good deeds have been incomplete, "shall go on foot;" the pious, it is added, shall indulge in hope, and "shall find ready prepared for them, when they come forth from their sepulchres, white winged camels, with saddles of gold," on which they shall triumphantly ride forward in the presence of the universe ‡, to receive the allotment of celestial favour.

Thus assembled, the nations shall await the hour of judgment; and, in due time, God shall appear upon a throne borne and surrounded by angels of

* Koran, chap. 54.

† Koran, chap. 22.

‡ Sale, Translation of the Koran, Preliminary Discourse, p. 112.

ineffable glory*. Before that judgment seat all hearts shall be laid open to unerring inspection. The sentence shall then be heard, and "it shall say
 " to the keepers of hell, Take those guilty who believed not in God, and were not solicitous to feed
 " the poor; and bind them and cast them into hell,
 " and put upon them chains of seventy cubits, for
 " they shall have no friend, nor shall they taste of
 " food but that which floweth from the body of the
 " damned, which none shall eat but the sinners†." But for you, ye righteous, awaits the decree of grace and mercy. "You shall be delivered from all evil." All that ye have done aright upon earth shall be counted in your favour, and be repaid in glory; for "God shall cast on you the brightness of his countenance," and reward your patient perseverance with a full measure of unfailing joy.

Then shall be renewed the punishment of the guilty. Retribution had already visited them in the grave. Their temples had been bruised by the iron maces of Manker and Nakir, the most obdurate of spirits; and they had been ceaselessly gnawed and stung by dragons with seven heads, the worthy auxiliaries of the interrogating angels‡. But they shall

* Kor. ch. lxix.

† Kor. ch. lxix.

‡ All men, according to a tradition from Mahomet, and the explanation of the texts of the Koran, ch. viii. and ch. xlvii. by the best commentators, are examined in the grave on the night of sepulture; and they who do not satisfy the interrogating angels by their answers, are punished as here described. The orthodox Mussulmen, in consequence of this tenet, "direct their graves to be made hollow, that they may be able to sit up in them the more easily when they shall be examined." The number of dragons which are to gnaw the bodies of the guilty is ninety-nine. Sale, Prelim. Disc. p. 101.

now depart to a more grievous punishment. Placed on the bridge Sirat, which is built over hell, and is sharper than the edge of a sword, they shall be precipitated, in their endeavours to pass it, into the gulfs below*. “And they shall be chained to
 “ devils, and dwell amidst burning winds, and scald-
 “ ing waters; and they shall, moreover, abide in the
 “ darkness of a black smoke, which shall cast forth
 “ sparks as big as towers, and shall in no wise shel-
 “ ter them from the heat, nor be of service against
 “ the flame †.” “Then shall they drink, as the thirsty
 “ camel drinketh, of boiling waters, and their bowels
 “ shall burst with the same ‡;” and they shall be
 beaten with maces, and clothed in garments of fire; and as often as they shall attempt to escape from their torments, they shall be dragged back again by evil spirits, who shall say unto them—“Taste ye the pain of burning ||!”

These horrors are vividly contrasted by the joys of Paradise. If the just also shall be placed on the bridge Sirat, they shall pass it with the swiftness of lightning under the guidance of Mahomet and his Moslems§. Then shall they enter the regions of promise, lavishly embellished for their reception, and abounding with whatever may minister to their delight, and indulge the most ardent and the least governable of their passions. Delicious fruits are to be tendered to their hand; they are to wander in vales watered by a thousand rills; their unfailing goblet is to sparkle and overflow with the richest juice of the grape; and the gentlest breezes,

* Sale, Prelim. Disc. sect. iv. p. 120.

† Koran, ch. lxxvii. 477. ch. l. 393. ‡ Kor. ch. lvi. p. 415.

|| Kor. ch. xx.

§ Sale, Prelim. Dissertat. p. 121.

loaded with fragrance, are to breathe perpetually around them, while the virgin Houris, black-eyed nymphs of immortal beauty, are to be transferred, in ample shares, to enliven and adorn their feasts; and to become for ever the promoters and companions of their joys*.

The Koran delights to dwell yet more minutely on this Paradisaical felicity. From the tribunal of God, it is said, the righteous shall be dismissed
“ to gardens of eternal verdure and unrivalled
“ beauty. Therein they shall rest upon couches;
“ a pleasant shade shall spread over them; the
“ fruit shall hang so low from the bough as to be
“ easily gathered; they shall be served by youths
“ of unfading bloom with vessels of silver and of
“ gold, from which they shall be given to drink of
“ wine cooled with the water of the fountain of Pa-
“ radise; they shall be clothed in garments of fine
“ green silk and brocades, and adorned with brace-
“ lets of silver, and the Lord shall say, Verily this
“ is your reward, and your endeavour is gratefully
“ accepted. And, moreover, green carpets and beau-
“ teous cushions shall be spread for their delight;
“ and rivers of milk, and of clarified honey, and of
“ wine that sateth not, shall flow around them; and
“ celestial nymphs, created of pure musk, secluded
“ from public view in spacious pavilions of hollow
“ pearl, a most peculiar race, having complexions
“ like rubies and pearls, and refraining their eyes
“ from all but their espoused,” shall devote to
them, with exclusive fidelity, their cares and their

* In the Gothic Elysium the same provision was made for the recompence and indulgence of the warrior and the hero.

loves, and delight to obey them for ever as masters and as lords *.

Over these regions of felicity, angels, the friends of the elect, are appointed to preside. They are vested with powers adequate to their duty as guardians of paradise; and it is for them to see that the measure of reward is full; to conduct the righteous perpetually to new pleasures in gardens of pomegranates, or by rivers of pure and refreshing waters; and to execute the divine will by perfecting and perpetuating the felicity of the blest.

In this singular romance of reward and punishment, we discover many lofty details and many high conceptions, mingled with the most palpable and puerile absurdities. Virgil would not have admitted "witnesses," and "summoners," and "angels armed with iron maces," and "winged camels with saddles of gold," and "beauteous damsels of organized musk," and immortal beings "clothed in green silk;" but his admirable work †, though it may not betray such wantonness and wildness of imagination, is far surpassed in the horror and the beauty which Mahomet has so profusely scattered over his scenes of retribution and of joy. The dull and shadowy Elysium, in which the discontented shades indulge their melancholy in myrtle groves, and fling the javelin, or harness the steed; will not be compared with the rich and vivid paradise through which the Mussulman is to wander at will under the guardianship of spirits of heaven, and in which he is to enjoy for ever, and with unsated appetite,

* Koran, ch. lv. ch. xlvii.

† The sixth book of the *Æneid*, one of the most splendid monuments which the Muse has ever dedicated to immortality.

all the delights of the goblet and the feast, which his most ardent and most voluptuous passions can require. If the Paradise be sensual, the Elysium is sensual also; but the scenery and enjoyments of the last are gloomy and languid; while the scenery of the first is bright and gorgeous, and the enjoyments are sufficient to the fruition of the beings who are to share them. The fiction of the Roman bard was not calculated to excite, in the bosom of the living, a wish to merit, or to procure, the posthumous rewards which it describes; but that of the prophet, as we know, kindled the highest emotions in the mind of the Arab, and not only sustained him in the toils and dangers of war, but in the sufferings of martyrdom. Nor is the hell of Tartarus equal, in sublimity and horror, to the hell of the Koran. In the former the lash resounds, the furies rage, the stone is heaved, the wheel revolves, and the parched and famished lips in vain endeavour to taste the coolness of the stream, or refresh themselves with the mocking and fugitive fruit. But the regions to which the guilty Islem are devoted, are far more terrifying to the sinner; and the punishments which the angel of retribution is here to impose, cannot be surpassed in the vividness with which they are described, nor in the anguish which they are to inflict. To live for ever amidst
“ burning winds and scalding waters, to feed on
“ that which floweth from the bodies of the damned,
“ to be chained in eternal association with devils,
“ to be clothed in garments of fire,” to be mocked by the tormenter—“ Taste ye the pain of burning !—” are denunciations which we may not compare with the feebler menaces that remind the sinner of the labours of Sisyphus, the wheel of Ixion, or the hunger and thirst of Tantalus; and we do not

wonder that, while the retribution with which the Roman was threatened in a future state, was so often regarded but as a puerile and contemptible tale, to be credited scarcely by the most ignorant of mankind; the retribution of the Koran should have contributed so effectually to subdue the minds of the Moslem to the purposes of imposture, and have armed the hand of Mahomet with an instrument of holy and irresistible terror.

I. In commenting on the future state which has been thus described, it may be first observed that the Prophet never permits a sentiment of a spiritual character, to blend with and refine the delights of his gorgeous paradise. Some, indeed, have laboured to prove that the happiness of his heaven was not wholly to consist in the impure indulgence of corporeal appetites; and the verse in which he informs his followers that "they shall have hereafter whatever they desire, and there shall be abundance of bliss with them *," is fondly quoted in justification of this opinion †. But we know not on what grounds such an inference is deduced from this solitary passage. Judging by the voluptuousness which breathes in the paradisaical fables of the "Apostle of God," we should rather conclude that by this "superabundant bliss," nothing more was meant than the highest degree of sensual indulgence; and the learned Sale, whose Mahomedan prejudices are neither few nor slight, is compelled, after some struggle, to acknowledge the striking contrast exhibited by the grossness of the Koran to the sublime purity of the gospel ‡.

II. It may be remarked, in the second place,

* Koran, chap. l. † Sale, Prelim. Dissertat. v. i. p. 133.

‡ Sale, Prelim. Dissertat. vol. i. p. 133.

that the future state disclosed by the Koran has been evidently framed to subserve not so much the interests of virtue as the purposes of imposture. The calm and moral graces of domestic life, the patience and fortitude of resignation, the retiring humility, the love of peace, the meekness and soberness of the unworldly spirit, were to be less encouraged to anticipate the felicities of hereafter, than the proselyting fanaticism of the Mussulman who was to stain his sword with the blood of the infidel, and to plant the standard of the prophet amid the desolation of cities and of realms which his sanguinary fury had overthrown. In this manner the paradise of fancy was become that of ambition and of imposture. The gay and florid phantom was first to lure disciples to the prophet, and then to stimulate them to bear his standard over the world, and to conquer or die in the destruction of his enemies, and the diffusion of his religion. —“ Say not, O true believers, that those who are slain in fight for the religion of God, are dead. Yea, they are living. And when ye encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads, till ye have made a great slaughter of them. God commandeth ye to fight his battles ; and as to those who fight in defence of God’s true religion, God shall not suffer their works to perish, and he will lead them into Paradise of which he told them*.”

When the “ last and best of the Prophets ” contrasted the green valleys, the fascinating nymphs, and the sensual enjoyments of his smiling Elysium, with the glooms, the woes, and the horrors of his hell, he proceeded on the same principle of worldly

* Koran, ch. xlvii. vol. ii. p. 377.

and political sagacity. If, in the regions of punishment, he exhibit every object which was best calculated to excite dismay, he dealt out the tortures of his imaginary retribution more especially to crimes which militated against his views. The flight of the Mussulman in the day of battle, the desertion of the crescent by the timid or reluctant proselyte, the disinclination to shed blood in the holy cause, the pertinacity which refused to renounce its first faith for a new creed, the hesitation which lingered to cast itself at the feet of the prophet; such were the sins which were most likely to obstruct the progress of the Koran, and the views of its author, and which were, accordingly, doomed, with unqualified and peculiar reprobation, to the dwellings of woe. The murderer and the robber were, indeed, to suffer; but not the murderer and robber who wielded the sword of extermination, and extended the havoc of spoil under the banners of the Koran; and, while all the enormities of a barbarous and sanguinary fanaticism were to be followed by eternal recompence, they who rejected the celestial mission of the prophet, or refused to go forth in war for the accomplishment of his purpose, were to be associated in hell with the lowest of the damned, and to taste, in the bitterest sense, "the pain of burning."

Thus did the mighty master of the Koran accelerate the progress of that frightful crusade against mankind, the Jew, the Christian, and the Gentile alike, in the advancement of which so many nations were overwhelmed, and the blood of Unbelievers was so prodigally and barbarously shed. The Impostor himself saw his dream of ambition fully realized. The zeal, the devotion, and the fanaticism of his followers were proportioned to the promises

with which they were tempted, or the menaces by which they were alarmed; and he beheld the plant of which he had sown the seed, and whose growth he had watched and nourished with so much care, rapidly springing to maturity, and beginning to extend the darkness of its shade, and to tender the bitterness of its fruits, to various nations of the earth.

The Mahomedan Doctors, under the Caliphat, laboured to confirm the tendency which their aspiring master communicated to his religion. The sword, in their language, as in that of the Prophet, is "the key of heaven;" and a single drop of blood shed in what they called the service of God, is as incense of priceless value. We know the result of this doctrine. The spell produced its effects. Fanaticism and ferocity soon marked with the traces of blood and of subjugation almost a third part of the globe; and the spirit kindled by the arts of the Prophet, for the accomplishment of his own purposes, descended, in all its religious and martial energy, to his successors, and confirmed their despotism in the finest regions of the East and of the West.

SECT. IV.

Temporal sanctions of the Jewish law—The doctrine of a future state but slightly intimated in the Old Testament—Christ came to proclaim it to all people—The unvarying justice of the future allotments announced by the gospel—General annunciation—No minute details afforded of the beatitude or the misery of a life to come—The view opened, admirably calculated to excite the hopes and fears of men—The sinner—The tribunal before which he is to be judged—Circumstances of his trial—Equity of his allotment—The upright—Magnificent, though general, declaration of the felicity which awaits them—Less ambiguous lights afforded on this subject—Heaven a scene of repose—Of celestial association—Of progressive improvement—Of advancing wisdom and knowledge—Here we dwell in shadows—In heaven this imperfection done away—Faith to terminate in vision—The upright to know as they are known—To be invested with that liberty which is as the spirit of life—To become like the angels of heaven—To see God face to face—The privileges, the glory, and the felicity included in these promises—Recapitulation—Conclusion.

AT the promulgation of the Gospel, few intimations of a future state were to be derived from the old, to illuminate the pages of the new, covenant. The law of Moses, in many respects, was of a local, a partial, and a transitory nature. The people of Israel required a code of a peculiar character. Prone as they were to swerve from the religion of their fathers, and to embrace the idolatry of the surrounding countries, they were to be separated, as far as possible, from the contagion of other nations, and to be restrained and governed by a system, referring, in its institutions, to their predominant propensities, and to their high origin as a chosen race. Hence their forms and ceremonies, their feasts and fasts, their sacrifices and atonements; and hence those laws which, in

some respects, were not good *, that is, were not to become of perpetual usage, because they were adapted to a race whose disposition was not yet sufficiently disciplined for the admission and adoption of more perfect ordinances.

The temporal sanctions by which this dispensation was enforced, referred to the same cause, and issued from it. A narrow-minded and obstinate people were rather to be influenced by the hopes and fears of immediate reward and punishment, than by any prospect, however striking, of a distant futurity. Their obedience was, therefore, required, under the promise of the immediate favour, or under the denunciation of the immediate wrath, of the Almighty. They were to flourish and decline as a people, in proportion to the fidelity of their legal and ritual observances ; and the frequent and direct interposition of Providence was to recompense their obedience, or to punish their rebellion. Accordingly, we find that, as they were sinful or righteous, their vines and their fig-trees were blighted over the land, and the people were thinned by famine, by pestilence, or by the sword ; or their harvests were abundant, their enemies were subdued, and they grew up and prospered in safety and in peace. But we are nowhere told that they were illuminated by the explicit and formal annunciation of a future state. However, in common with the rest of mankind, they may have admitted the immortality and responsibility of the soul; the sanction of their law was deduced, principally, or solely, from the theocracy under which they lived, and by which, according to their deserts, their

* I gave them laws, says God, which were not good.

temporal recompence or retribution was to be meted out.

When Christ became the Legislator of man, the exclusive and limited code was to be succeeded by a universal law ; the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile was to be thrown down ; observances, and forms, no longer necessary, were to be done away ; and they who dwelt in the uttermost parts of the earth, strangers to the covenant of promise, and to the elder law, were, at length, together with the Jews, to be embraced by the mercies of an unbounded salvation. Accordingly, the Gospel of Christ held forth to all mankind one salutary and consistent law, and one sanction of reward and punishment. A new tree of life was planted, not within a narrow and exclusive pale, but in the midst of the nations, to extend its immortalizing fruits to all times and to all people. A perfect system of edification and grace was promulgated, accomplishing the successive revelations by which the knowledge of God and of his will had been hitherto preserved among men, and communicating that Evangelical wisdom which is one day to "cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

Of this dispensation, the object was to unite under one shepherd and in one fold, all the nations of the earth ; and the sanctions were to be of proportional clearness, efficacy, and universality. Nothing less could be adequate to such a purpose, or possess the cogency of such sanctions, than the explicit and unqualified annunciation, to all, of a future state ; and this has been done in a manner so different from the mode in which the same tenet had been proclaimed by the Legislators of all other religions, that Christ has been emphatically said to have "brought life

“and immortality to light,” and to have especially revealed, in all the perfection of justice and mercy, that august and awful tribunal, before which the nations shall be finally gathered together; and shall finally hear the voice which is to dismiss “the wicked” into everlasting punishment, but the righteous to “life eternal.”

In the promulgation of this doctrine, we are not to look for the subtlety of a school, or the reasoning of a sophist. Christ came not as a leader of a sect, but as a teacher of men. In this character he appeared through his whole ministry. No laboured and minute speculations, no unnecessary and rhetorical artifice, were to impair the simplicity and beauty of his doctrine. He spoke with the authority of a master; and he never maintained this character with more dignity and effect, than when he proclaimed the sublime doctrine of the immortality of man—“At the end of the world, the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from the just. Then shall the wicked be cast into a furnace of fire, and the righteous shall shine forth as a sun in the kingdom of the Father. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall see God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for my sake, for great shall be their reward in heaven. The Son of man shall come in the glory of the Father, and then shall he reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Every one that shall forsake houses and lands for my sake, shall receive eternal life. And when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the

“ holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his power; and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall say to the righteous, ‘ Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world,’ and to the wicked, ‘ Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*.”

From the clearness and simplicity with which Christ thus announces the great doctrine of a future state, he never departs. He blends with his doctrine no tales of extravagance, and no fallacies of fiction. Addressing man, not men, in the temper and spirit of a universal lawgiver, he has nothing to do with sects and parties, and is never deflected from his course by ambitious or selfish views. If he announce punishment, it is not to intimidate opponents, but to repress crime. If he proclaim reward, it is not to seduce a fanatic host round his standard, but to encourage the perseverance of piety and of virtue. He disdains to open his heaven to the headstrong zeal of the proselyte, or the devoted valour of the partizan; and the hell which he proclaims is set apart, not for the reception of his temporal enemies, but of the wrathful, the uncharitable, and the unjust. All is designed and calculated to supply higher and brighter motives to the fidelity of obedience; to console the afflicted of one world with animating prospects of the felicity of another; and to subdue the obstinacy of guilty men by the assurance of a just and inevitable retribution; and the best, the noblest, and the most sublime of all precepts, those of the Gospel, are, in this manner,

* Matt. chaps. xiii. v. xvi. xix.

enforced by sanctions which impress them more deeply and effectually in the heart, and recommend them more powerfully to the adoption and observance of mankind.

All other religious Lawgivers have disgraced their scheme of human accountability by the fables of superstition, by accommodating it, as far as possible, to their own temporal designs, or by rendering it subsidiary to private, partial, and local institutions. Christ alone, in proclaiming the "high calling and election" of man, has sought to strengthen the undoubted laws of piety and of virtue, by the aid of high and adequate motives. All times and all nations are, therefore, included in his doctrine; that which was announced to the Jew, was intended also for the Gentile; and the sun which rose to illuminate the land of the Israelite, was lighted up, also, without respect to place or period, to shed its wholesome and guiding beams over the universe.

Of the express nature of the heaven and the hell which have been thus announced, neither Christ nor any of his disciples has afforded a very minute detail. It might have been improper or impossible to present any accurate description of the beatitude or misery of the world to come; and enough has been done, if life and immortality have been so brought to light by the Gospel, as to supply motives which, without being powerful enough to over-rule the free agency of reasonable beings, are admirably calculated to awaken men from the slumber of unthinking negligence, and to animate and confirm them in the diligence of duty.

Speaking of the punishment of those who die in impenitence and crime, the scriptures have employed metaphorical expressions, which announce, with great cogency, the penalties reserved for the sinner in a fu-

ture state. We are told of the worm which never dies, the flames which never shall be quenched, the pangs to be endured in the association of evil spirits, the blackness of darkness which shall rest on the habitations of the condemned, the impassable hell where there shall be no hope, and where the conscience of the sufferer shall superadd the pangs of remorse to those decreed by the equity of heaven. In these representations, it would be thought, enough is displayed of the certainty and sorrow of final retribution, to operate as a motive to the reformation of crime, where crime is not yet hardened into the obduracy of impenitence ; and the sinner must indeed be dead at heart, and irrecoverably immersed in guilt, who can close his ears against the voice which thus reminds him of the inevitable and fearful allotment to be awarded, for the punishment of his transgressions, by the justice of the Almighty.

And what and how sublime are the circumstances which shall accompany and heighten the terrors of the final sentence of God to the sinner ! The universe shall be assembled before its Judge, who shall come forth in the clouds and in the majesty of heaven. The heart of man shall be laid open to the unerring inspection of the Almighty. The monarch and the slave shall be called with the same impartiality before the same tribunal. All shall alike endure the searching of that eye from whose glance nothing shall be concealed. All shall be alike subjected to the decree of that justice which nothing can evade. Every deed shall be traced to its principle and motive, and every motive unfolded from its first conception to its final impulse. The inquiry shall not be, by what oblations have ye endeavoured to conciliate celestial favour, with what zeal have ye contended for the dogmas of a creed, with what

fervour have ye fulfilled the observances of the pilgrimage, or with what rigor have ye imposed on yourselves the protracted sufferings of voluntary penance? The sinner shall be exposed to a very different scrutiny. What evil propensity have ye endured? What earthly passion have you subdued? What fleshly lust have you resisted? What ensnaring temptation have you opposed and overcome? What brother have you edified by your example, or aided by your charity? With what meekness and humility have you inquired and believed? On the reply of questions such as these is the future destiny of the guilty to depend. There shall be no hope where there has been no righteousness; and the voice of presiding and omnipotent justice shall proclaim the decree, in the presence of the multitude of nations and the hosts of heaven, which is demanded and merited by the perseverance of impenitent crime.

In this manner the veil of retribution is lifted up before the eyes of the sinner. He is called upon in one world to recognise the tribunal which is erected in another, and admonished of the equity from which there is neither escape nor appeal. There is no room left for fallacious trust, no encouragement afforded to guilty hope. The crime is stated, the law promulgated, the measure of the punishment announced, the irresistible justice of the Judge proclaimed, a deep, a solemn, and an awful forewarning communicated of the danger and the penalty of transgression. Does the sinner close his ears against the admonition? Does he despise the menace? Does he brave the Judge? Does he voluntarily and madly continue in the rebellion which, as he is so taught, shall conduct him to eternal retribution? He

by the fear of change, nor by the sentiment of suffering. "All tears shall be wiped away from all eyes." There shall be no more mourning, no more sorrow. The diseases, the competitions, the envyings, the malice, the crimes, which generate so much misery on earth, shall no longer pollute the chalice of joy. The flower that springs up shall conceal no serpent under its leaves; the light that beams abroad shall be subject to no cloud and no variation. That which is conferred shall be for ever; or, if there be change, it shall not be that which converts good to evil, and resolves harmony into discord, but that which shall augment the confidence of the blessed, while it augments their felicity.

Even in this negation of evil shall be included a great and absolute happiness. The soul which has endured in the body so many pains; which has trembled with the fear of change in its happiest hours; which has seen the pleasures of the world spring up only to be consumed by some canker-worm within; which has drunk to the dregs the cup of time and chance; and has so long experienced the transiency and mutability of all mortal things; shall have to lament no more the frailty and the vanity which had been, hitherto, inscribed on all its joys. Instead of being confined to a body equally frail, feeble, and infirm, it shall finally be clothed in a form incorruptible and immortal. It shall be disturbed neither by fear, by anxiety, nor by sorrow, for these cannot exist in a state of security and rest; and the ambiguous tranquillity which it has been at best permitted to enjoy on earth, shall be converted into that peace which passeth all understanding, and shall continue unimpaired for ever and ever.

II. In this life we are dependent one on another;

and if, of all association of mind with mind, the pleasure is proportioned to the confidence with which it is indulged, and the wisdom and virtue which it exercises and improves, how imperfect, in this view, must be the brightest and best society of earth ! Suspicion and reserve seldom fail to mingle with, and to impair, the happiness of all human intercourse. No man can be certain that the temper of those with whom he holds his most affectionate communion, shall be always undisturbed ; and the social blessings which flow from the brotherhood of our nature, and which are delightful and numerous, are yet perpetually diminished and dimmed by some fear and some doubt generated by experience, or justified by the uncertainty of mortal friendships. But the disembodied spirit, communicating with beings of another world, shall have no occasion for apprehension and distrust. Where all shall be good, there can be no diffidence ; where all shall love, there can be no deceit and no malignity. A universal amity shall produce but universal concord ; and the communication of the just with the just, and of the righteous with the righteous, instead of being restricted by the caution of distrust, shall have nothing to check the freedom, and corrupt the purity, of its current. For the dissonances of earth, shall be, accordingly, substituted the harmonious intercourse of unsuspecting good will. The soul shall experience in its associates the attachment of celestial benignity, discover in them the graces of celestial virtue, and receive from them the communications of a celestial wisdom *. There shall exist no vices to impair an intercourse so intellectual and refined ; and no jea-

* Corinth. i. 9, 10.

lousies to counteract the holy affections which that intercourse is to exercise and perfect. The communion of the Saints, on the contrary, shall exist for ever, connecting spirit with spirit in the golden bonds of fraternal association, and drawing perpetually closer the links of that chain which binds together, in holy and imperturbable fellowship, the inhabitants of heaven.

III. The happiness of hereafter shall be farther augmented by progressive knowledge. Even in his present state man is formed to advance in moral and intellectual acquirements. He possesses intelligence to investigate, and is impelled by fancy and curiosity to inquire. Every truth which he discovers adds something to the dignity and happiness of his nature, and becomes a means of further and, perhaps, higher acquisitions. Yet, at best, "he sees but in part." An insect, a blossom, a hair, a clod, exceeds the analysis of his brightest powers; and the intelligence, to which he is so much indebted for improvement and delight, is yet slow in its discussions, frail in its inferences, imperfect in its discoveries, and at every moment, subject to doubts which it cannot resolve, and to darkness which it is unable to dissipate. But not so shall it be in the regions of the future. "There," we are told, "that which is in part shall be done away." The spirit, no longer darkened by the veil of flesh, or disturbed and distracted by busy and corrupt passions, shall then enjoy, and exercise, and exult in, a more sublime and penetrating vision. The veil of shadows which had been so long hung before our eyes shall be lifted up, and the cloud which had so long rested upon us shall be touched and brightened into everlasting glory. Nothing shall remain to obstruct the path

and retard the pursuit of wisdom. That which had been unattainable shall be acquired ; that which had been seen but in part shall be clearly and fully revealed ; and the soul, endowed with powers as much superior to those which distinguished it on earth, as the abodes of earth are inferior to the habitations of heaven, shall be replenished, as we may humbly hope, with high and holy knowledge, shall constantly approach towards that perfection which it is, at once, to imitate and adore, and shall be perpetually enriched by new influxes of grace, of wisdom, and of glory.

In this world, as we are farther informed, " we walk by faith and not by vision." From the type and figure we may here ascend to Him whom they feebly represent, and we may learn to contemplate, with trust, the saving mercies which descended from heaven for the edification and salvation of man. But doubts and difficulties here also disturb and darken our view ; and faith recognises, in its noblest contemplations, the shadow only of that eternal Being whom it adores. Whereas, hereafter, the contemplation of the spirit shall not be limited to the feeble and inadequate type. Faith, holy and inspiring as it is, shall be then abolished, and vision, yet more inspiring, shall be then perfected. The august mystery shall be brightened into the intelligible and satisfying certainty. We shall no longer trust, but behold ; no longer feebly aspire in imperfect hope, but repose and exult in perfect conviction. While the mansions of heaven shall surround us, while the angels of heaven shall be seen in our dwelling, we shall look up from the graces and mercies which we had contemplated in the pages of inspiration, to Him from whom those graces descend,

and by whom those mercies have been accomplished; and the Creator, whom we here but dimly discover in his works,—and the Saviour, whom we here recognise but as the sufferer of the cross,—and the holy Spirit, who reveals himself here but by his sacred influences, we shall then contemplate, the first, in all the perfection of omnipotence, the second, in all the majesty of renovated glory, the third, in all the benignity of unbounded love. What shall be the emotions inspired by such a vision! How shall the spirit be rapt in admiration, in gratitude, and in devotion, when it shall be thus permitted to drink at the fountain head of all truth, and to replenish its fervors and its holiness by familiarizing itself, if it may be so said, with objects of such transcendent purity, majesty and power!

As if these magnificent declarations were insufficient, it has been explicitly revealed to us that “we shall know as we are known*.” Well may such a promise astonish us; and imperfectly, at best, in our present state, can we comprehend the fulness of its meaning. How are we known, and by whom? Is it by a frail and finite being, or is it with a feeble and imperfect vision? No!—but by an Omniscient Power, by an inspection which nothing can evade, and with a knowledge to which are laid open all the recesses of all hearts, and all the most secret thoughts engendered by the passions and the will. If, therefore, we shall know as we are known, we must be prepared for such knowledge by an extraordinary accession of faculties and of powers. The image of God, we may presume, which is here clouded in us and debased by ignorance and by sin, shall be reno-

* 1 Corinth. xiii.

vated and brightened, in the world of spirits, and perfected by perpetual influx of wisdom and of glory. Then, perhaps, shall the mysteries of creation and of providence be laid open to our view ; then we shall dwell in light, not the beam of a material and perishable sun, but the all-vivifying efflux of the Eternal Godhead ; and the evidences shall encompass us, and be understood, of that effusive goodness and mercy which are among the attributes of the Almighty, and which, if we beheld them, through the veil of flesh or of faith, with reverence and with awe, how much more, when we contemplate the perfection of their unclouded glory, shall they kindle our gratitude, our veneration, and our love !

We are also told that the just shall become, hereafter, “ like the angels of Héaven,” and enjoy that “ liberty which is as a spirit of life *.” The promise opens an additional view of the future attainments of the Elect. If the soul, even in this world, amid so many obstructions and impediments, and involved in so much darkness, be permitted to add grace to grace, and excellence to excellence, how shall it advance towards perfection, when it shall be thus gifted with angelic qualities, and thus endowed with “ the spirit of life !” May we not presume that every glance which it shall then send forth amid the wonders of heaven, shall bring back some lofty and sublime conviction, some satisfying certainty which had been concealed before, some sacred and noble truth which shall augment the stores of knowledge, and quicken, with additional motives, the ardor of piety, and the obedience of holiness ? Or are we to suppose that the unchecked spirit, with all its celestial endowments, shall stand

* Epist. Rom. viii. 2, 3 ; 2 Corinth. iii. 17 ; Jude, ver. 25.

still ; with its plumes of immortality, shall never soar ; and, with the liberty which " is as the spirit of life," shall stay its course, and reject the means and the felicity of perpetually advancing towards the throne of that ineffable Being to whom every approach must be an augmentation of light, of wisdom, of beatitude, and of glory ?

There is one farther declaration in Scripture which may afford grounds for still more sublime persuasions on the subject which we are here discussing. " Thou shalt not behold my face," said God to Moses, " for none can behold and live *." Even he, the inspired missionary of God, who had heard the thunderings and the voices of the mount, and was wrapt in the lightnings of the divine presence, was yet unworthy and incapacitated to behold, save in the imperfect mirror of types and figures, the countenance of the Almighty. His highest and noblest faculties would have shrunk from the slightest beam of that radiance which encircles the majesty of God ; and, if the veil had been lifted up, for a moment, which concealed from his view the eternal and ineffable glories of the divine nature, he would have ceased to live. But that which the favoured legislator of Israel could not have endured, shall be disclosed, in clear and blessed revelation, to the least of the children of heaven. Not only shall the just be " heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," but they shall be given to behold their Maker " face to face," and shall see him as he is, in the full and unveiled plenitude of his being. It is not the reflection of the glory which shall descend upon them in illumination, but the glory itself. They may bow down in awe,

* Exodus xxxiii. 14.

and veil themselves in humility, before the omnipotence of the Godhead, but the graces and mercies by which that omnipotence is softened, may equally inspire them with the holy and purifying emotions of gratitude and love; and, in the language of Tillotson, they shall be replenished by the vision with a higher and more satisfying beatitude, and “shall take in all that light, and joy, and happiness, which flow perpetually from the presence of God.”

That we may better appreciate the nature of this promise, let us recollect that God is the fountain of light, of life, and of felicity. Of all created and sentient beings the happiness is, at best, but a feeble and dependent stream, and often embittered and darkened by misery. But God, whose beatitude can be impaired by no external cause, must necessarily possess in himself all the principles of eternal and imperturbable blessedness. In his presence, as it has been said, “is the fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore.” Whatever of real and satisfying good is participated by men or angels, is derived from his will; and, as he closes or opens his hand, all things living suffer or rejoice. To him, therefore, we cannot be permitted to approach in holiness and in purity, without approaching proportionally to the fountain of felicity, and tasting the stream. And, if this be true, what shall be the happiness of the spirit which shall be given to rejoice beneath the full influence of divine glory, to partake the fruition of the divine presence, and to be “made glad with the light of the divine countenance for ever!”

Even in this world the most stable and perfect happiness we can enjoy is derived from the faith and hope that God is with us, overshadowing us by

his Providence, and secretly and invisibly controlling events for our good. By this trust, piety and virtue are strengthened for the contest they have to endure, and it is this trust which has so often sustained the perseverance of the saint, and the heroism of the martyr. But, whatever be the confidence which is thus inspired, it must be proportioned to the imperfection of that vision which we here enjoy, through faith, of the ways and mercies of the Almighty. He to whom we elevate our views is a God who hideth himself, as in a pavillion, in the very brightness of his glory, and whose designs and ways are past finding out by the children of men. We, therefore, look up to him with astonishment and awe; and, while we wonder and admire, we are embarrassed and disturbed. "We go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but we cannot perceive him; and where he worketh, but we cannot behold him*;" and we sometimes permit ourselves, in the perplexities and darkness which encompass us, to join in the exclamation—"O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even unto his seat."

But when the feebler light, which here permits us but to see as through a glass darkly, shall hereafter advance to the brightness of full day, we shall no longer be subject to the frailty of imperfect, and sometimes, perhaps, of hesitating persuasion. Mystery shall cease to rest upon the ways of God. A more perfect revelation shall diffuse the brightness of its beams over the wonders which had been hitherto concealed in impenetrable obscurity; and "the face of God," the so long unapproachable

* Job xxiii. 8, 9.

glories of the Father, shall be disclosed unveiled to our eyes. The happiness and the exaltation which may be thus conferred upon us, we can here but imperfectly comprehend. But if faith and hope even in their less certain anticipations be blest, what, we may ask, shall be the blessing of certainty itself! How shall we rejoice when trust shall terminate in conviction, and "that which is in part," that which affords occasion to the hesitations of doubt and fear, "shall be done away!" How shall we exult, when we shall be permitted to contemplate that God who arrays himself in the manifold mercies of protecting omnipotence, unbounded love, and paternal majesty!

They who are thus to behold "Him who sitteth on the throne," cannot but receive a proportional augmentation of wisdom, and, consequently, of happiness. Ignorance and error, the abundant source of crime and misery, to them shall be no more. They shall behold all that is good, and great, and holy, and pure, in Him to whose footstool they are invited to approach. All that can kindle the highest emotions of gratitude and love, all that can elevate and edify the heart, shall be revealed to their view. Shall they raise their eyes to such a vision unmoved or unblest? Shall no refreshing streams of knowledge and of joy flow in upon their spirit, when they shall thus approach the eternal fountain of all joy and of all knowledge? Or, while they participate the illumination which descends upon, and brightens, and glorifies, the angels of heaven, shall they not also participate the felicity and the exaltation in which the angels rejoice?

To sum up all at once; the spirits of the just shall hereafter rest in the love, as in the light, of God.

“ They shall be changed into the same image ” with him whom they adore. The emanation of divine beneficence shall descend upon them, and they shall come like unto Him from whom it flowed. Then shall be perfected that sabbath of peace which shall never be disturbed by a jarring voice. Then shall be consummated the harmonious brotherhood of saints and angels ; and heaven itself, irradiated by the immediate glory of the divine Presence, shall be but one mighty temple in which the uncounted number of the elect, animated by the holy spirit of concord and of love, shall enjoy the felicity of celestial association, and exult and triumph in the consciousness of Almighty favour.

If we now review this very imperfect and inadequate detail, we may more clearly discern the nature of that recompence which is reserved for the just in heaven. Here, every thing reminds us of the fallen and degraded state of our nature. The soul looks abroad through the medium of senses at once fallacious and frail, and inhabits a mansion which is every moment crumbling into dust. It is restricted and oppressed by infirmities not its own ; it languishes and droops with the perishable form to which it is attached ; it is perpetually beset with the evils which result from corporeal appetites and wants. Such a state admits of no satisfying and abiding happiness. Every where the tear is shed, the lamentation uttered, the disappointment endured ; and, of all the pilgrims and sojourners on earth, there is not one who can boast exemption, for a moment, from the ills, and frailties, and chances, which perpetually beset and disturb the condition of man.

To these evils, the common inheritance of all, are

added others not less numerous, nor less afflictive. By the changes of life, the trials of probation, the fraud, the malice, and the competition of the world, the difficulties and obstructions which, at every step, oppose the progress of intellectual acquirement, the limited and narrow boundaries which circumscribe the attainments of human knowledge, we are perpetually reminded of the imperfection of the state in which we are here placed, and of the powers which we are here to exercise; and almost every thing within and without us contributes to defeat our views, to render our happiness precarious and incomplete, to mingle bitterness in the cup of our brightest joys, and to instruct us, that on the best acquirements of this world, according to the language of the preacher, are inscribed only "vanity and vexation of spirit."

But Christ and his Gospel have confirmed the hope of better things to come. He has effectually drawn up the veil through which a future life had been, hitherto, but dimly and doubtfully contemplated, even by the philosopher and the sage; and he has opened an inspiring view of the glories of the new Jerusalem, the unfailing mansions of the just, the building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. He has not only announced, fully and clearly, the sublime doctrine of a life to come, but confirmed it by evidences of proportional authority; for he himself lay down in the grave, became the first fruits of them that slept, ascended visibly to heaven as the forerunner of his disciples, and left behind him the pledge that he went to prepare a place in his Father's kingdom for those that love him. In perfect consistency with the declarations confirmed by these facts, is the whole tenor of the

gospel. We are taught alike by Evangelists and Apostles to regard the earth but as the vestibule from which we are speedily to pass into the palace of an Almighty Sovereign, and we are almost permitted to behold a state of probation, corruption, and calamity, already vanishing away, and succeeded by a state of peace, of order, of purity, and of joy. Even the nature of the felicity which is to become, hereafter, the portion of the righteous, is graciously disclosed. Care and sorrow, and disappointment and dismay, shall exist no more. Fluctuation and change shall be followed by stability and security, pleasures subject to alteration and decay, by imperishable enjoyment. For ignorance, there shall be knowledge; for darkness, light; for infirmity, glory; for the bondage of the world, the liberty of heaven; for mortal existence, eternal life; for the visions of faith and hope, the august realities of the kingdom of God. All that is in part shall be done away. Doubt shall terminate in certainty, trust in conviction, the holy desire of the saint and the martyr, in divine fruition. A sun shall arise, which is never to be dimmed. A calm shall reign, which is never to be disturbed. A fountain of felicity shall be opened, which shall never fail, and of which all the elect shall be permitted to drink for ever and ever.

If the language in which these magnificent assurances are conveyed be often figurative, the figures are, in the highest degree, forcible and expressive. Frequently, however, the phraseology of scripture, on this subject, is more plain and simple, though not less lofty and impressive; and when we are told, "that the spirits of just men shall be made perfect; that they who shall be accounted worthy, shall die no

“ more, but be equal to the angels, as being children
“ of God, and heirs of the resurrection ; that the
“ righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the king-
“ dom of their Father ; that they shall be like God,
“ and see him as he is, and behold his face in
“ righteousness, and be satisfied with his likeness ;
“ that they shall not walk by faith but by vision,
“ and shall know even as they are known ; and that,
“ in a word, glory, and honour, and immortality,
“ shall be to every man that worketh good, to the
“ Jew first, and also to the Gentile* ;”—we may
justly admit the force and fulness of such annun-
ciations, and be satisfied with the assurances thus
communicated, of the certainty of a future state,
and of the high, and progressive, and enduring,
felicity, which is reserved in heaven for the recom-
pence of the elect.

Such are the views of a future state which are
unfolded to the disciples of the New Covenant, for
his comfort and his edification. When we consider
them in their nature and tendency, we readily admit
that they are admirably calculated to awaken in the
heart the deepest and most salutary motives of fear
and hope, and to sustain, in the warfare of this
world, the triumphant perseverance of piety and of
virtue. When we compare them with the annun-
ciations of other religions on the same subject, we
may be permitted to affirm that life and immortality
have been indeed brought to light by the gospel
alone, and that the communications which the holy

* Hebr. xii. 23 ; 1 Corinth. xiii. 9, 10, 11 ; Luke xx. 34, 35,
36 ; Matt. xiii. 4, 3 ; Hebr. xii. 22, 23, 24 ; 1 John iii. 2 ; 1 Cor.
xiii. 2 ; Rom. ii. 2.

sages of Greece, of Rome, of Arabia, and of the East, were utterly unable to afford to their revering and credulous disciples, have issued, with as much grandeur and sublimity, as simplicity and precision, from the despised, uneducated, and persecuted Christ, and from his equally scorned and illiterate disciples.

CHAPTER XI.

EXPIATION—ATONEMENT.

SECT. I.

The great object of all religions to supply the means of expiation to sin—Expiations and atonements of the Greeks and Romans—Sacrifices and oblations—Human victims—Offerings of meat and salt—Lustrations by water, by sulphur, by fire, by air—Desecrated victims—Consequences on the moral and religious principles of mankind.

THROUGH all the ages of antiquity, and equally in civilized and barbarous nations, the moral and religious responsibility of man was every where acknowledged, and every where some ceremony or rite was framed and sanctioned, by which the sinner was to avert the penalty, and purify himself from the stains, of sin.

The universality of the practice may demonstrate its traditionary origin, and from the sacrifices prescribed to Adam and his family may be derived the expiatory offerings of later periods. But, whatever may be the source to which the custom is traced, there is, it would be thought, an instinctive persuasion in the heart, which, connecting punishment with guilt, implies the necessity of an atoning ransom. A friend slays his friend, in the blind rage of a sudden quarrel; a husband sacrifices his wife in the madness of jealousy; a corrupt judge condemns the innocent man to death. Sinners, like these, cannot always still the recollection of their

crimes, and the apprehension of punishment. Conscience or religion pursues them, and their hearts are torn and distracted by the terrors of anticipated retribution. With these impressions they naturally lay hold of any means which may relieve and quiet their alarm; and penances, and sacrifices, and lustrations, have been consequently employed, in all times, to make atonement, as far as possible, for sin, and, thereby, procure rest and peace for the sinner.

Yet, when we examine these schemes for tranquillizing the spirit of the criminal, we find them, almost, without exception, contemptible or absurd. They have no rational reference to the guilt of crime, or to the nature of God. Madness or folly have carried them to excess; and folly or madness only could attribute to them a purifying or redeeming efficacy.

The Greeks and Romans were as anxious as other nations to devise systems of purification. We, consequently, discover innumerable ceremonies interwoven into the texture of their religion for the purpose of appeasing the wrath, or satisfying the justice, of their gods. The rich oblation, the lustral stream, the consecrated incense, were perpetually resorted to with all the credulity of ignorant and implicit faith. The offerings of superstition were to supply the ransom which should have been tendered by penitence and reformation.

The homicide, the false witness, or the murderer, were thus provided with a ready atonement for their crimes; and conscience was quieted by forms which contributed neither to deter the sinner from future guilt, nor to animate the motives of piety and virtue.

That which at first had been, probably, instituted

as a type, to preserve in the minds of men a due sense of the enormity of sin, and of the necessity of atonement, was regarded as itself the remedy and the salvation. It was not inquired on what principle of nature or reason the blood of bulls and of goats, or the water of a stream, or the perfume of a blossom, was to be invested with a salutary and saving efficacy. Men adopted, with ready zeal, the expiations which they found prescribed by their religion; and the temples were crowded, not by those who had forsaken their sins, but by those who satisfied themselves with the hope, that they had found a sufficient atonement for guilt in a cheap and accommodating ceremony.

The moral influence of the religion, diminished by so many other causes, was enfeebled yet more by this facility of expiation. A few punctilious observances, an attitude, an ejaculation, the sprinkling of a little water, might relieve the sinner from the necessity and the trouble of self-correction, and the painful alarm of apprehended punishment. Repentance and reformation were to have nothing to do with the easy absolution. The efficacy was to exist, not in the internal purity, but the external form; and the criminal, easily complying with the terms of mercy, might derive from a ready redemption of past crimes, an effectual encouragement for future transgressions*.

When Jason had slain his brother-in-law Absyrtha, he proceeded with Medea, who was yet more criminal than himself, to procure absolution from the priestess of Æa. The absolution was granted. A worthless offering was sufficient to pay for the blood

* Ovid. *Fast.* lib. ii. v. 37. Schol. In *Ajac.* l. 667.

of a murdered relative ; and the tranquillity and confidence of the murderers were restored.

The crime of Clytemnestra was punished by the vengeance of a son. How were the filial hands, so stained with the blood of a mother, to be cleansed ? How was the victim, persecuted by the Furies, to avert and soften the vindictive powers ? Was he to shed the tear of penitence on the altar, or to purify the taint which had corrupted the heart ? This might have been a mode of redemption tedious or difficult ; and Orestes, condemned to an easier penalty, was to find, in a stolen statue, the blessings of expiation.

By the feast of the *Lectisternium* the anger of the gods, and the crime by which it had been kindled, was to be appeased and redeemed with equal certainty. Festive tables were spread, and loaded with a repast worthy of celestial guests. On surrounding couches, decorated with flowers, and strewed with odoriferous herbs, the statues of the gods, to whom the feast was dedicated, appeared to recline *. A body of priests, who presided in flowing vestments over the festival, sometimes prolonged the celebrity for many days. The divine guests were gradually propitiated by the flavour of cups

* Valerius Maximus, lib. ii. ch. 1. mentions a *Lectisternium* dedicated to Jupiter. The statue of that god only was honoured with a couch, while the statues of Venus and Mercury, and the other deities, were less reverently placed on inferior seats. *Nam Jovis epulo ipso in lectulum, Juno et Mercurius in sellas ad cœnam invitabantur.* Livy frequently alludes to this ceremony, and refers the institution of it to the three hundred and fifty-fourth year of Rome. lib. v. c. 15. Suetonius speaks of the pillows which were laid on the splendid beds prepared for the gods. In Cæs. August. c. 75. The Greeks conciliated their divinities by a similar festival. In Schol. Pindari. Ode Olymp. 1.

and viands consecrated to their enjoyment; and the costly entertainment was repaid to the criminal, by the exemption from penalty which it procured, and the hope and trust which it restored.

Sacrifices and offerings of various kinds were instituted for the same purpose of propitiation. The herb, the incense, the cake of meal and of salt *, the fruits of the earth, were the prevailing oblations of earlier and more savage times; but, even then, the blood of the victim was sometimes shed, and the penalty of sin was supposed to be paid by the immolated animal. At a subsequent period the sanguinary offering became more prevalent, and was adapted, with anxious care, to the temper of the god or of the goddess to whom it was tendered. The bull was consecrated to Jove, the heifer to Juno, the dove to Venus, and the sow to Ceres †; but it was at length discovered, that oblations of this kind, with their accompanying libations, were not always of sufficient cost to appease and satisfy the offended deities. The child was, therefore, occasionally offered up by the father, and consumed amid the flames of the altar ‡. The slave or the captive bled to expiate the private or public sin. Human victims,

* Non sumptuosa blandior hostia
Mollibit aversos penates
Farre pia, et saliente mica.

Hor. lib. iii. Ode 23.

Horace was an Epicurean. He perfectly understood the folly of the more splendid sacrifices of his own time, and he could not always suppress a smile at the pompous vices of the religion of his country.

† It was the duty of the priest to select the victims with a minute attention to the rules of sacrifice. The slightest error vitiated the oblation.

‡ Dionys. Halicarnas. lib. v.

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loaded with the crimes of the nation, were driven forth, by a fearful desecration, to perish under the inviolable interdict of fire and water. Three hundred captives expired before the shrines of the irritated gods, by the pious command of Aristomenes the Messenian; and the oracles, uttered by a senseless or frantic girl, under the control of an artful and venal priesthood*, were often heard to demand from individuals or the people, those savage holocausts by which it was thought the anger of the infernal or supernal deities might be most effectually appeased.

Still, however, the poverty which might not be able to supply the more precious oblation, was permitted to benefit by cheaper modes of expiation. Occasionally it was necessary to lave the whole body, but a less general lustration might, at other times, be sufficient for the purification of the sinner†. Hippolytus, in Euripides, who had contracted guilt from the solicitations of Phædra, purified himself from the taint by bathing his ears; and the miserable Pilate seems to have imagined, that he was

* Plut. In Nic. et In Demosth. Herodot. lib. i. c. 53; lib. vi. c. 66.

† The trouble of purification by water was often attached to the office of the priests, who stood at the entrance of the temple, "holding green boughs, dropping with water, in their hands, with which they besprinkled the people." Sozomen, Hist. Eccles. lib. vi. p. 644. Virgil refers to the same practice:

*Idem ter socios purâ circumtulit undâ
Spargens rore levi et ramo felicitis olivæ.*

Æneid. lib. vi. 229.

See also Pliny, Nat. Hist. lib. v. c. 30. A burning torch taken from the altar was sometimes immersed in consecrated water, and employed instead of the branch of olive or laurel. Eurip. Hercul. Fur. v. 288. Aristoph. In Pace.

to expiate his crime by washing his hands. In these offices the water of the sea was preferred to that of the river, and the water of the river to that which was stagnant. But no sacrifice was to accompany the lustration, no penance was to be endured, and no penitence was required. The only punishment of sin was to consist in the slight trouble of the ablution ; and the exclamation of the poet which condemned the easy and unconditional repentance, was poignant as a satire, and rational as a rebuke *.

Through all heathen antiquity these expiations by water prevailed. There is no reason to suppose they were considered as, in any respect, emblematic or typical. They were in themselves perfect, not allusive. The conscience of the sinner and the wrath of the gods were equally to be appeased by the facile purification ; and guilt was spared the more troublesome atonement of repentance and reformation, by the performance of a ceremony, to which ignorance and superstition only could attribute an expiatory influence.

To these lustrations others were added which employed the efficacy of sulphur, of fire, and of air. The last was accomplished by a gentle agitation of the atmosphere round the object to be puri-

* Ah ! nimium faciles qui tristia crimina cædis
Fluminea tolli posse putatis aqua.

Ovid. Fast. lib. ii.

Achilles was purified by ablution after the murder of the king of the Leleges. Athen. lib. ii. c. 6. And Æneas would not even take charge of his household gods until he had laved his hands in the stream, after his last combats amid the ruins of Troy.

Tu, genitor, cape sacra manu, patriosque Penates.

Me, bello è tanto digressum et cæde recenti,

Attrectare nefas.

Æn. lib. ii. 717.

fied; and all were in constant use, both on occasions of public crime and of private delinquency*. To the slave only they were forbidden. Cities, armies, territories, as well as individuals, were to be purged from their defilements by the admitted efficacy of these uncostly purifications; but, here also, as the mode was prescribed by the priest with minute and punctilious accuracy, the slightest deviation from the appointed rule, was sufficient to vitiate the whole ceremony, and, consequently, to avert the mercy of the gods.

To these modes of purification were added others equally absurd†; and it would appear from the whole system, that men had hitherto formed no rational conception of the nature of expiatory atonement; that the most insignificant observances, and the most ludicrous forms, were sufficient to satisfy celestial wrath; and that whole communities were taught to bring down upon themselves the absolving mercies of their deities, far less by the integrity of their councils, than by ceremonies and oblations which cost them nothing, not even an aspiration of piety, or a sentiment of justice.

In this respect, then, the religion of the Roman and the Greek affords no evidence of the legislative wisdom of its founders. There was nothing to im-

* For the use of sulphur, fire, and water, in purification, see Ovid. *Metamorph.* vii. 2. Pliny, lib. xxxv. c. 15. Juvenal, *Sat.* ii. 157.

† Aristoph. In *Ran.* 74, 5. Schol. Euripid. *Iphigen.* In *Taur.* 1193. Plutarch. In *Marcell.* Of the modes not here enumerated, the expiation by scattering the ashes of a calf which had been killed in the belly of its mother, was peculiarly efficacious, and might absolve the crime not merely of offending individuals, but of guilty nations. Dionys. Halicarnass. lib. v.

prove the heart, much to pervert. He who might avert the punishment of crime by a worthless oblation, was not likely to be impressed with a deep sense of the enormity of sin, or the necessity of reformation. The gods who were to be appeased by ceremonies of no service to piety and virtue, could not be considered as very averse from the crime which they forgave. If a sense of celestial mercy might be indulged, there was no ground for connecting the mercy with the justice and purity of the divine character. The sin for which pardon was sought, might be, at once, redeemed and retained. The hope of a ready absolution was to diminish the fear of an equitable punishment; and the guilt which was expiated was not to be repressed, but encouraged, by the nature of the expiation.

SECT. II.

Expiations of the Hindus—Sacrifice adapted to the temper of the god to be appeased—Cow dung and cusa grass—Draughts of water, sprinkling of the hands, partial or general ablution—Observances at the hour of death—Penance and pilgrimage—Minute forms essential to the efficacy of the expiation and atonement—The four redeeming probations of the Yogee—The ransoms by bribes, by fasts, by a repetition of holy texts, by swallowing the four things produced by a cow, by paying the price set upon crimes—Extravagance and mischief of these doctrines.

THE Hindus, like all other people, have uniformly admitted the necessity of some atonement for sin. However imperfect might have been their notions of the divine nature, they were persuaded that guilt would be punished by the wrath, or by the justice, of their deities; and they were, therefore, solicitous to discover some modes of purification or of sacrifice, by which their guilt might be removed, and the gods propitiated. Among the conflicting tenets of truth and falsehood contained in their religion, they could yet discover enough to admonish them of the danger of transgression; and the trials of transmigration which, according to their creed, were to be exactly proportioned to the magnitude of their offences, were sufficiently disclosed to awaken their fears, and to urge them to apply the healing remedies of expiation recommended by their priests. Among these, indisputably, were enumerated penitence and reformation of life; and many beautiful maxims are scattered through their holy books, to instruct them that the sinner must conciliate pardon by tears shed for the errors of the past, and by salutary resolutions of future amendment. But this lesson, so wise and

useful, was encumbered by auxiliary doctrines of easy atonement. Superstitious tenets were prodigally mingled with useful precepts. There was a light which might have afforded some guidance to the wanderer on his way, but there were also clouds by which he was encompassed, and which almost wholly intercepted and absorbed the beam. The essential principle was forgotten, and the worthless, and, frequently, the corrupting form was invested, in its place, with expiatory and redeeming efficacy.

All the Hindu gods required sacrifices and offerings of expiation; and the offerings and sacrifices varied, according to the predominant temper or vices of the gods to be appeased. To the deities of a more gentle and gracious character were tendered the oblations of fruits and flowers; to those, and they were the most numerous, whose cruelty and ferocity alarmed the fears of their votaries, was offered the blood of the brute and the human victim. The mild Ganasa demanded the perfume of fragrant blossoms, and the sprinkling of odoriferous oils. The black and savage Cali, the goddess with the collar of golden skulls, delighted in oblations of a different character, and was to be appeased but in proportion to the sanguinary oblations which were laid upon her altar*.

* Matta especially delighted in human sufferings. She might not have required the life-blood of her votary, but she demanded from him a ransom not less hideous. He might approach her altars in vain with fruits and flowers, and the choicest of his flocks; but to tear out his tongue, and lay it bleeding on her shrine, was certain to conciliate the favour of the goddess. She, indeed, was ready to heal the wound; and, frequently, a new tongue, germinating from the roots of the old, restored to the exulting fanatic the power of

Other and various expiations were required by the fancy or fraud of the priest, and practised by the superstitious faith of the people. Cow-dung and cusa grass were sometimes employed with purifying efficacy, but the slightest failure in the form prescribed, was sufficient to vitiate the whole ceremony. Lustration by water was, often, of equal virtue; but every stream did not equally supply the cheap and satisfying purgation. Certain rivers, and especially the Ganges, possessed, in a higher degree, the purifying quality; and the votary, happy if he could reach, from whatever distance, one of the consecrated streams, was certain that the leprosy of his sins would be healed by the waters of his Jordan.

The mode of application was as easy as it was effectual. Sometimes the believer took copious draughts of the water, or sprinkled a portion of it upon his hands; and, sometimes, he applied it to the purpose of partial or general ablution. The cure which his piety adopted, was sanctified by his fancy. The complete or partial purification of the body was to accomplish the purification of the mind; and the defilement of both was cleansed at the same moment, and by the same easy and effectual remedy.

It was at the hour of death especially that the credulous piety of the faithful was to apply to the remedial efficacy of his holy rivers. The expiring victim, assisted to reach the water, was to remain seated on the shore till he should be carried away by the re-

again uttering the praises of the appeased divinity. Ayeen Akberry, vol. ii. 113. See also, for the offerings tendered to Callao, according to the Vedas, *Asiat. Regist.* v. i. 205. Heetopades, pp. 11, 212, 292, 372.

flux of the tide. But he was to be peculiarly blessed, if, at the moment he was about to perish, he should hold in his hand the tail of a cow. In contact at once with the water, and with that sacred animal, and smeared with her purifying dung, he became more holy in the estimation of his gods, and more certain of an easier transmigration, and a less distant heaven. His sins were thus removed, his death was happy, and the conviction of his absolution dried up the tears of his friends and of his family.

Sometimes force was employed where the will was wanting; and the old, however reluctant, were compelled by their relatives to anticipate the approach of death, and resign themselves to the waters. The process was simple. They were hurried to the scene of death. Their mouths were stuffed with clay. Their cries were stifled; and the holy violence which submerged them in the stream, whether that of their household or of the priest, secured them the pardon and the favour of heaven.

Other observances, not less absurd or barbarous, were recommended by the religion of the Hindu for the redemption or expiation of sin. The Faquir gashed himself with wounds; lay for years on beds of spikes; suspended his body on the iron hooks of a revolving wheel; and deserted the duties of social life to acquire the ascetic sanctity and perfection which were to please his gods. The pilgrim, animated by the same zeal, traversed extensive regions, and exposed himself to innumerable calamities, that he might observe the sanctifying ceremonies of Juggernaut, and perish beneath the wheels of the chariot of the idol. And even the mother, with similar impressions of celestial placability, was to

expose her helpless children, not merely without tears but with exultation ; and to anticipate the mercy of the gods for herself and for them, when they perished by famine, or were destroyed and devoured by birds of prey*.

On the subject of these expiations, the learning and civilization of Benares were equally inadequate to correct the doctrine of the priests, and the superstitious faith of the people. Other topics were elucidated with wisdom and erudition, or discussed with genius and with taste, by the Hindu philosopher, while a tenet of infinitely deeper interest was darkened and perverted by the vilest fanaticism for the most pernicious purposes. We see the effects. The tree is known by its fruits. Man was exercised in absurd and barbarous observances. Heaven was insulted by the mockery of unreal and worthless expiations.

In many instances the forms of those purifying rites are as numerous and insignificant, as they are thought to be necessary and essential. If a man is to perform a meritorious ablution at twilight, he must begin by throwing water on his head, on the earth, and towards the sky, and again towards the sky, on the earth, and on his head ; and he must further sip the water without swallowing it, and, while he retains it in his mouth, exercise himself in abstract and silent reverie†. The rules of ablution,

* The exposure of children, as I have already observed, has recently ceased, not in consequence of the improvement of the religion, but of an order issued by the humanity of Marquis Wellesley.

† Mr. Hastings, in his preface to the Geeta, says, that " he was once a witness of a man employed in these holy abstractions. His right hand was covered with a loose sleeve, within which he passed

at other periods of the day, are no less minute. The votary is to commence the observance by "tying
 " the lock of hair on the crown of his head, taking
 " much Cusa grass in his left hand, and three blades
 " of the same grass in his right, and placing a ring
 " of grass on the third finger of the same hand."
 These and similar ceremonies of preparation are indispensable. Without them the ablution would be deprived of its efficacy; and the sinner is to be saved less by the purifying operation of the water, than by the accurate observances of the forms to precede or accompany the ablution*.

But nothing seems to be admitted to possess a higher degree of atoning efficacy, than penance. By penance the votary is best tried, best purified, and most effectually absolved. Hence multitudes have been found, in all ages, to subject themselves to voluntary and self-inflicted torture; and the Stoics of Greece, however emphatically they may have talked of their triumphant fortitude, were not to be compared with the calm and patient martyr of the East†, who obliterates his sins, and brings down upon himself the favour of heaven, by enduring,

the beads of his rosary, one after another, through his fingers, repeating, with the touch of each, one of the names of God, while his mind laboured to collect, and dwell on, the qualities which appertained to it. He showed the violence of his exertions to attain this purpose, by the convulsive movements of all his features, his eyes being at the same time closed, doubtless to assist his abstraction."

* Observations on the Religion of the Hindus, by H. T. Colebrook, Esq. *Asiat. Regist.* vol. v. 34.

† Sacontala, p. 87. *Voyage de Tavernier*, tom. iv. p. 118. Hamilton, *Voyage to the East Indies*, vol. i. p. 274. Renaudot, *Anciennes Relat.* pp. 32, 81. Sonnarat, *Voyage*, vol. i. p. 176.

with an undisturbed and unsubdued spirit, the four forms of prescribed probation.

I. He is, sometimes, to commence his abstractions and sufferings as early as his eighth year, when he is invested with the Zennar*, accompanied with a short piece of the skin of the antelope. From that moment, his ablutions and penances become daily more numerous and rigid. He is clothed in a coarse and neglected garb. His forehead is marked with ashes, or stained with vermillion. He averts himself from all the duties and engagements of society. He sleeps on a bed of straw, or under the shade of the first tree which offers him shelter ; and he often scorches his worn and emaciated form in purifying fires.

II. Having, in this manner, sustained the ordeal, from five to twelve years, of ceaseless mortification and suffering, he enters upon his second and more painful probation. He now performs daily a double number of sprinklings, ablutions, and sacrifices. His garment consists of a slight sheet, which imperfectly covers his shoulders, his loins, and his thighs. His thoughts are abstracted from every thing social and human. He supports life by gleaning in the fields and forests, and by the food which incidental charity deposits in his way ; and he rigorously devotes his nights to vigils and penances which frequently induce the feebleness and misery of premature old age.

III. His third probation follows, if he have strength to endure it. Retiring to the depths of the woods, he builds himself a cot, and bids farewell to all

* The Zennar is a cord of three threads, in honour of the three principal deities.

worldly things. A scanty vestment of the leaves or bark of trees but partly conceals his worn-out limbs. Forms and observances multiply upon him daily. In summer he surrounds himself with fires, and remains exposed, in that position, to the full beams of the sun; in the rainy season he dwells upon a stage raised on four poles above the waters which deluge the plains, and endures, without shelter, the unwholesome and enfeebling inclemency of the season. The fruits and grain that grow wild in the desert, after having been steeped a little in water, constitute his sole or principal food. When, by these austerities, he has subdued his body into apathy, he commences, for farther trial, a long and solitary journey towards the North, or the South. This pilgrimage he is permitted to close by an act of suicide, and thus to accelerate his acquisition of immortal felicity; but he may be restrained by the belief that, unless he also fulfil the fourth degree of probation, he forfeits all title to the more perfect and sublime rewards of Mokt, or heaven.

IV. In the last probation, the holiness of the aspirant is yet more fearfully and sternly tried. All things that are desirable upon earth are to be regarded with indifference or contempt; and all the evils that most afflict and overwhelm the spirit of man, are to be voluntarily endured. The probationer is clothed in a yellow girdle which scarcely circles his waist. He leaves his woods, exhibits his wretched form in the crowded Bazar, scourges and lacerates himself in the sight of the multitude, and demonstrates, by all possible means, an utter indifference to hunger and thirst, to shame and reproach, to nakedness and exposure, and to all the ties, interests and affinities of life. His voice is never heard, save

to utter the mysterious term *Awan*, which commences the Vedas. Nothing molests, nothing pleases, nothing attracts him. His corporeal functions lose their power, his mental faculties are clouded and overwhelmed; and, in this state of uselessness, abstraction, and decay, he becomes the object of veneration to the whole populace, assumes to himself the especial favour of the eternal Vishnu, receives the homage alike of priest and people, and sanctifies, as he passes along, the dust on which he treads.

To encourage these vain and unprofitable austerities, and this utter renunciation of all that is human in the character of man, the promise is held out of unfading felicity and unbounded power. In proportion as the penance advances, and the votary decays under his trials, he daily acquires higher and brighter privileges; and the sufferings which impair his character and qualities as a man, are compensated by an increasing influx of supernatural perfections. He casts aside his humanity only to substitute for it a fancied Godhead. It is gradually permitted to him to extend his control to all the works of material nature, and to all classes of mortal existence. For him, as he wills, the stars are to descend from heaven, and the demons are to arise from the lowest region of punishment. He may disembody his soul, and soar into the skies; and the gods themselves are to submit their decrees to his authority, and to listen to his voice, with the assenting humility due to a superior being*.

The religious reveries which thus stimulate the fanatic while they extinguish the man, have been indulged from the earliest periods of the mythology

* Ayeen Akberry, vol. iii. 215, 210. Bagvhat-Geeta, p. 124.

of India. They are announced in the Vedas, and embodied in the popular religion of the country; and the absurdity, and superstition, and insanity, which they involve, seem only to have rendered them more dear to the faith and prejudices of the populace. Unworthy to be embraced, for a moment, even by the lowest classes of reasonable beings, they have yet operated, with a wide and pernicious influence, on the public temper and the public credulity. Multitudes of men have been abstracted from social duty, to perish by the slow suicide of lingering austerity. The woods have been crowded with maniac candidates for Godlike powers. A miserable fanaticism has been diffused abroad in direct hostility to every principle of rational religion and of common sense; and man, becoming the dupe of an extravagant creed, has been alienated from himself, and taught to hope, from useless and pernicious observances, what he should have been instructed to seek by just piety and sober virtue. It is not the multitude of Yogees alone which have been impressed with these mischievous persuasions. From the bosom of the Yogee, they have extended their influence to common life. They who do not love the penance, learn to admire and respect the devotee who endures it. A false notion is communicated and imbibed of the duties which are due to God and man. The Deity is degraded, in vulgar acceptance, into the friend and protector of the most worthless or useless of human beings; and the faith which is to govern so many millions of people, is vitiated by the infusion of a tenet calculated only to kindle the fanaticism, and to extinguish the moral virtues, of man

To this system, the Braminical priest has super-added a system of fraudulent gain ; and they whom he should conduct to truth, learn from his lips that redemption from crime may be also procured by a holy bribe. All sins have their graduated price. The pagoda enriched, the guilt is absolved. The value of the offering determines the extent of the expiation, and the amount of the divine favour. The slightest coin may buy off a sin ; but a vine tree or chariot of gold is an irresistible oblation* ; and the gods smile at the crime when the affluence of the criminal lavishes itself upon the altar, and appeases at once the avarice of heaven and of the priest†.

The ablution, the sacrifice, the penance, and the bribe, are not, however, the sole means of salvation proposed to the Hindu by his religion. For the variety of his crimes there are modes of redemption yet more absurd, if possible, than the most absurd of those which have been enumerated. For lesser sins a Brahmin may be absolved “ by once suppressing his breath or more, while he repeats in his mind the most holy text ‡.” “ He who commits a crime of the first degree, may expiate his offence by attending a herd of cows for a year, and constantly repeating the divine text beginning with Pava-mini ||.” “ A fast of three days, and two ablutions, and three repetitions, daily, of the text Agha-

* Ayeen Akberry, vol. iii. 29. Tavernier, lib. i. c. 2.

† He must submit to penance ; but the penance being performed, he must give all he possesses to such as best know the Vedas, that is, to the priests. Laws of Menu. Sir W. Jones' Works, vol. viii. 95, 102.

‡ Ibid. p. 117.

|| Ibid.

“ marshana *, are of equal efficacy ; but if a priest
 “ shall retain in memory the whole Rigveda, he
 “ shall be absolved from guilt even if he had slain
 “ the inhabitants of three worlds, and had eaten
 “ food from the foulest hands †.” “ For minor
 “ thefts an atonement may be made by a fast of
 “ three days, or by swallowing a portion of the five
 “ pure things produced from a cow, milk, curds,
 “ butter, wine, and dung ‡.” “ A Bramin, if he kill
 “ a snake, must give an hoe to the priest ; if an
 “ eunuch, a load of rice straw ; a masha of lead, if
 “ a boar ; and a pot of clarified butter, if a goose,
 “ a cormorant, a bittern, or a cow §.” “ For killing
 “ intentionally a virtuous man of the military cast,
 “ the price or penance must be the fourth part of
 “ that imposed for killing a priest ;” but he who is
 guilty of the death of a Sudra, has only to discharge
 the mulct which is incurred by designedly destroying
 an ichneumen, a cat, a frog, a dog, a crow, or an
 owl §. By these penalties, sometimes so ludicrous
 or so slight, the sinner is to be purified from his sins,
 and a redemption supplied without the cost, in
 a single instance, of a redeeming virtue. I dwell
 not on the tendency of such doctrines. The cheap-
 ness of the expiation may be thought to encourage
 the crime which is to be so easily absolved ; and the
 religion, however pure in other respects, which thus
 trifles with the ransom by which the penalty of sin
 may be discharged, can have little claim to the ac-
 ceptance of mankind, and be little favourable to
 sound piety, or rational morals.

* † ‡ § Laws of Menu. Sir William Jones' Works, vol. viii.
 127, 128, 111, 105. The rules for expiation laid down in these
 laws are numerous and puerile, and a further enumeration of them
 here, would neither instruct nor entertain the reader.

SECT. III.

Expiation and redemption as taught by the Koran—The saving and supererogatory efficacy of good works—Auxiliary rites and observances—Prayers, fasts, pilgrimages—Ludicrous and contemptible forms—The ritual false as it refers to God, useless or pernicious as it refers to men.

IN the religion of the Mussulman, there are many forms and many ceremonies designed to appease the anger, and conciliate the favour, of God; but no reference is to be found to the satisfaction which might be due to the divine justice for the apostasy of man, or to the ransom which might be required to redeem him from the bondage of sin and death. Mahomet, who was not unacquainted with the law and the gospel, alludes to the sin of Adam, without once adverting to the necessity of remedial suffering; and to the mission of Christ, without acknowledging even the reality of his death. "They have said, Verily, we have slain Jesus Christ, the apostle of God, but they slew him not, neither crucified him, for he was represented by one in his likeness; and God took him to himself, and God is mighty and wise".* The prophet, therefore, instructed his followers to trust, not to the expiatory sacrifice of the cross for their redemption, but to themselves; and they were to find, in the implicit observance of his ritual and of his laws, the sole and the certain means of propitiating the divine favour.

In the process of his legislation, he asserted, not only the necessity,—which who would not assert?—but the saving and supererogatory efficacy, of what

* Koran, ch. iv. vol. 1. p. 124.

he denominated good works. To give alms, to vindicate the faith, to slay the infidel, were acts of high and atoning virtue, and might claim remuneration from the equity of the Almighty. But other performances, equally essential, were to be super-added to those means of celestial acceptance. Forms and ceremonies, which, however consonant to the religious customs of the Arabs, seem scarcely worthy of a code designed to extend beyond a village or a tribe, were to have their share in the work of redemption. If properly observed they might conciliate the divine favour; if carelessly neglected, even the warrior of Islem might forfeit his hope of future blessedness.

Of the rites thus invested with superstitious importance, some are absurd, some pernicious, and, in any moral or religious sense, none are useful. Ablutions, purifications, fasts, pilgrimages, and the periodical recitation of formal prayer, enter into the catalogue of redeeming duties; but the duties exist as much in the form as in the substance, in the mode as in the act; and the manner of the observance has been prescribed with a solemnity and precision which leave no doubt of the efficacy attributed to it by the prudence, the policy, or the zeal of the impostor.

Five times in every twenty-four hours the office of prayer is to be performed. The holy ejaculations are to be accurately counted by the beads. A peculiar attitude is to be observed during the devotion. The face is to be cautiously turned towards the temple of Mecca; and the temper of the heart is forgotten, while modes like these are not only minutely specified, and earnestly enforced, by the laws, but enumerated among the essential and unal-

terable conditions on which the blessings of Paradise are to be obtained *.

The fast is equally essential, and equally encumbered by formal regulations. It is sometimes to be protracted for a month; but, if the abstinence which it requires be encouraged by high and holy promises, the slightest irregularity during its continuance, the smelling of a perfume, the ablution of the bath, a free inspiration of the air, the touch, however incidental, of a woman, the intentional swallowing of the saliva, the exercise of speech, may vitiate the whole rite, and render it utterly vain and useless †.

The ceremonies to be observed at the conclusion of the pilgrimage, are not less absurd than the rules of the fasts. It is not enough that the pilgrim should perform his journey to Mecca from distant regions, in heat or cold, in sickness or want. When he arrives at the Caaba, whatever be his infirmities or exhaustion, he is to confirm the efficacy of his preceding sufferings, by observances which might excite the smile or the pity of the philosopher; and the kisses to be lavished in silent adoration on the black stone ‡, the devotional draughts of the purifying

* Koran, ch. xxiii. vol. 2. p. 178. Abulfed. Vit. Mahom. pp. 38, 39. Hötting. Histor. Eccles. tom. viii. pp. 470, 529. Smith de Morib. ac Instit. Turcar. Ep. i. 33. Hyde de Relig. Vet. Pers. pp. 8, 9, 126.

† Sale, Prelim. Disc. § iv. pp. 148, 149.

‡ This stone was originally whiter than milk, but had been long darkened by the sinful lips of the devotees. It fell, with Adam, upon earth, was miraculously preserved at the deluge, delivered by the angel Gabriel to Abraham when he was building the Caaba, and, finally, was set in silver, and placed in the south-east corner of the holy temple. By some Mussulmen it has been called the right hand of God on earth, and, by all, it is held in the utmost veneration.

waters of Zemzem*, the processions to be seven times reiterated in unequal movements round the temple†, the hurried race between the mountains Safa and Merwa‡, the occasional stooping and looking back, like Hagar in quest of water for her son||, the “tumultuous rushing” from the valley of Mina to mount Arafat§, the casting of seven stones to repel the intrusion of the devils upon the devotion of the votaries¶, are all enumerated as forms absolutely necessary to the atoning efficacy of the pilgrimage itself, and to be, therefore, observed with patient and pious fidelity.

Of the doctrines by which the religion of Mahomet has enforced observances like these, it will not be too much to say that they are false, as they respect God, and useless, or worse, as they respect man. What idea is he to entertain of the divine placability, who is taught to confide in such easy and such ludicrous modes of atonement! How must the im-

tion. It is among the most important duties of the pilgrims to worship it with holy kisses and humble prostrations. Sale, Prelim. Disc. sect. iv. p. 156.

* The well Zemzem is on the east side of the Caaba. Abdallah al Háfedh, remarkable for the accuracy of his memory, acquired that power by drinking large draughts of the well. D’Herbelot, p. 5.

† The pilgrims are required to run round the temple seven times. The three first times, they proceed in a short quick pace, the three last more gravely and slowly. Pocock, Spec. p. 314.

‡ Reland, de Rel. Mahom. p. 121. || Id. Ib.

§ Kor. ch. ii. p. 36.

¶ Gagnier, Vie de Moham. tom. ii. p. 131. Pocock, Spec. p. 315. More particular account of all these forms may be found in Chardin, Voyage de Perse, tom. ii. p. 440. Pitt, on the Relig. &c. of the Moham. p. 92. Garnier, Vie de Moham. tom. ii. p. 258. Boulainvill. Vie de Mahom. p. 54.

pression of essential obligation be weakened, where the disciple is required by his religion to devote so much of his life to such burdensome, and, often, such afflicting ceremonies ! And what must be the religion itself, which, uttering, at one moment, precepts of sublime morality, and doctrines of holy wisdom, announces, at the next, tenets and commands, substituting forms for duties, and trusting the expiation of the offender to worthless observances ! In these devices of imposture there is much to darken and pervert the faculties of men, nothing to enlighten or exalt. Where men should have been edified by spiritual instruction, they are converted into the slaves of external modes. Where God should have been made known in the purity and holiness of his justice, he is represented as well pleased with the pious tumults of vagrant pilgrims, their rushing steps, and their reverence of a stone. The disciple is thus diverted from the wisdom which would have enlightened, to the ceremony which degrades, him ; and he is moulded into the enthusiast or fanatic of a corrupt and corrupting creed, instead of being instructed in the precepts of genuine religion, and encouraged in his duties to God and man.

SECT. IV.

Expiation and atonement of the Gospel—All other expiation and atonement at best but typical—History of Christian atonement—Allusions to it—Preparatory occurrences—The law and its sacrifices necessary—The character of Christ not merely that of a divine teacher—The justifying and redeeming efficacy of his suffering, as stated in the New Testament—The mystery and complication of means involved in the sacrifice of the cross, no objection—Repentance not sufficient—Redemption, though the wisdom of God in a mystery, not wholly incomprehensible in its nature, its cause, or its effects—Three lights in which it may be viewed and justified—Considered as it refers to God, to Christ, and to mankind—The awful and affecting lesson which it affords—Consolatory to the upright—Admonitory to the guilty—Edifying to all—Retrospective view.

THE doctrine of atonement for the sins of man, by some sacrifice more precious and more acceptable than priests and kings had ever been able to procure, is, frequently, and with great clearness and precision, announced in Scripture. Of this sacrifice, every other, from the beginning of time, was to be considered but as a shadow and a type. All the blood which had ever been shed upon the altar by Jew or Gentile, was, in this view alone, of any value. What connexion can exist between the oblation of the animal and the guilt of man? Is there, or can there be, any redeeming virtue in the blood of bulls or of goats? Or shall we believe that the justice of God can consent to transfer the crime and the punishment of the offending sinner, to the head of the unoffending beast? Tradition affords nothing to sanction, and reason and nature are wholly at variance with, such a belief. We are taught, therefore, to regard the sacrificial oblations of men as typical of an oblation to be one day offered of a more perfect nature; and

we are directed to look from the hecatomb or the holocaust of the heathen, or of the Israelite, to that prefigured and final peace-offering of Calvary, which, by satisfying the justice of God, was to redeem the sins of mankind.

The history of this stupendous event is recorded in the New Testament, and the preparatory plans of Providence which were necessary for its accomplishment, are detailed, or alluded to, in the Old. When the first man had departed from the covenant of innocence, and thereby not merely forfeited his title to immortality, but subjected himself to the penalty of the violated law, the voice of God was heard to pronounce the sentence he merited. The sentence was death, death to the first offender, and to the race, which the sin he had introduced into the world was to vitiate and to degrade. But the terrors of the just Judge were softened by the mercies of promised salvation. The head of the serpent was to be finally bruised by the seed of the woman; and a new æra was, in due time, to commence, when, all things being accomplished, a voice from heaven should pronounce peace on earth, and good will to man.

Through many succeeding years the providence of God was exercised in preparing the world for this sublime and august occurrence. The patriarchs were permitted to see afar off the day of salvation. The prophets alluded to it in their predictions. A chosen people were rendered the repositories of the promise which pointed to it; and the occurrences of ages were rendered necessary to the acceleration of a period which was to be distinguished for ever by the accomplishment, in this instance, of the beneficent purposes of heaven.

By various institutions, and by types and figures, the hopes of men were perpetually directed to the coming of Messiah. Was the sacrifice appointed, the rite ordained, the ceremony announced, the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled on the door of the Israelite, to avert the hand of the destroying angel? All was allusive to Him who was to become a passover, not to the Jew only, but also to the Gentile, and to accomplish the redemption, not merely of a favoured people, but of all mankind. If we read of the smitten rock, from whence gushed forth the salutary waters to quench the thirst of the tribes of Israel; here too we discover, with Saint Paul, a type of Him who was to become the fountain of living water springing into everlasting life. If the brazen serpent was lifted up in the wilderness for the preservation of the people, in this image also we contemplate a shadow of Him who was lifted up on the cross for the redemption of the world. Or, if we behold the lamb without blemish, to be sacrificed only at Jerusalem*, we recognise a manifest type of Christ, and a plain prefiguration of the manner of his death†. We may, therefore, be permitted to

* Exod. xii. 5, 46; Deut. xvi. 5, 6; Numb. ix. 12.

† There is a wonderful agreement of this type with the thing typified. Our Saviour's death occurred on the very same day, and on the very same hour of the day, on which the paschal lamb was appointed to be slain; and as a bone of the paschal lamb was not broken, so, by a signal Providence, a bone of Christ was not broken, though it was customary to break the bones of those who were crucified, and the bones of the two thieves who were crucified with him were actually broken. It is in allusion to this agreement, that John the Baptist says to the people, "Behold the Lamb of God;" that Saint Paul speaks of "Christ our passover," and that Saint Peter announces him as the Lamb without blemish and without spot; John i. 29; 1 Corinth. v. 7; 1 Pet. i. 19.

conclude, that the legal and devotional economy of the Jews was designed to prepare for, and to introduce, that better dispensation of which Moses and the prophets were the harbingers, and which, at the appointed time, was to ratify a new and perfect covenant between God and man.

The plan which was to hasten the accomplishment of this intended mercy, was not confined by Providence to the Jewish nation. It seems, on the contrary, to have embraced the whole earth. If nations were divided by war, or united by peace; if arts and sciences were diffused; if empires were founded or overthrown; if the monarchies of the East or West contended for the subjugation of each other, or were finally to obey the despotism of a single master, all appears to have been carried on by the secret decree of the Almighty, to dispose the world for that hour when Christ was to enter upon his august mission, and to become the legislator and redeemer of man. The whole scene of preparation impresses us with a sublime idea of the Divine government. It includes all the principal regions of the earth; all ancient history is occupied or concerned in the occurrences which it involves; and it exhibits to us, statesmen, princes, kings, the masters and legislators of the earth, all employed in accomplishing the purposes of God, while they thought only of accomplishing their own.

During this progression of things, the religious dispensations of the Jews were progressive also. At first, the will of God was made known by more obscure and mysterious revelations. To these succeeded a less dark and indistinct annunciation of precept, of promise, and of command. In proportion as time advanced, the divine scheme was gra-

dually opened and advanced. Light after light arose with increasing brightness to illuminate the Israelite. From Adam to the patriarchs, from the patriarchs to Moses, from Moses to the prophets, institutions and doctrines were made known by the will of God, and adapted to the periods in which they were announced ; and the church of the Old Testament was instructed by these repeated interpositions of divine wisdom, to anticipate, with expectation and hope, that epoch when the Sun of righteousness was to arise with healing upon its wings, and to pour its light on the habitations of Zion, and on every nation of the earth.

In this manner the way was prepared for the new and more perfect dispensation of Christ. The law and the sacrifice, which had been previously communicated and required, were necessary but inadequate, and, being inadequate, were to be temporary. There had been no remission of sin, for there had been no ransom. The old law, as the apostle argues, “ could not stand, because of the weakness of the “ means ; for it was not possible that the blood of “ bulls or of goats should take away sin.” This insufficiency was, consequently, to be supplied, or the sin was to remain ; and the remission, which mankind had hitherto been unable to procure, was to be purchased by the new and more costly sacrifice of Christ. “ If perfection were by the Levitical priest- “ hood, what need had we that another priest should “ arise after the order of Melchisedech ? And if “ the first had been faultless, then should no place “ have been sought for the second. There is, there- “ fore, a disannulling of the commandment going be- “ fore by the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. “ For the law made nothing perfect, but the bring-

“ing in of a better hope did ; and Christ hath now, “in the end of ages, put away sin by the sacrifice “of himself.” If, indeed, as the inspired apostle has elsewhere stated, “there had been a law given “which could have given life, verily righteousness “had been by the law ; but the law being but a “shadow of good things to come, could never, with “those sacrifices, make the comers thereunto perfect, “for then would they not have ceased to be offered*.” The conclusion to which we are thus led is clear ; all else was insufficient to the accomplishment of the sublime purpose of redemption, and the blood-shedding of the cross alone was to appease and satisfy the justice of God.

The various passages in the New Testament which enforce, or harmonise with, this conclusion, are numerous and precise ; and I proceed to adduce them, in the very words in which they are expressed, in order to ascertain the character evangelically ascribed to Christ as a Redeemer and Mediator, and the benefits which we are taught to expect from his sufferings and his death.

I. First, then, Christ is said to have made satisfaction to the Divine justice for the sins of mankind, by dying for us, by bearing our sins, by taking away our sins, by being a propitiation for our sins, by purchasing, redeeming or ransoming us with the price of his blood—

By dying for us.—“He laid down his life for “us. He died for our sins. He was delivered for “our offences. He tasted death for every man. He “was wounded for our transgressions. He was “bruised for our iniquities †.”

* Hebr. vii. 11, 18 ; viii. 3, 7 ; Galat. iii. 21 ; Hebr. x. 1, 2.

† 1 John iii. 16 ; 1 Corinth. xv. 3 ; Rom. iv. 15 ; Hebr. ii. 9.

By bearing our sins.—“ He was once offered to bear the sins of many. He bare our sins in his body on the tree. He hath born our sins and carried our sorrows. He laid on himself the iniquity of us all *.”

By taking away our sins.—“ He was manifested to take away our sins. He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He hath washed us from our sins by his blood. The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin †.”

By being a propitiation for our sins.—“ Him God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. God sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world ‡.”

By purchasing, redeeming, and ransoming us with the price of his blood.—“ He purchased the church with his own blood. He came to give his life a ransom for many. He gave himself a ransom for us all. In him we have redemption through his blood. He hath redeemed us to God by his blood. We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ||.”

II. Christ is described as our mediator, intercessor, and advocate with God.—“ He is the mediator of the new covenant. There is one mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus. He maketh intercession for us at the right

* Isaiah liii. 5; Hebr. ix. 26; 1 Pet. ii. 24; Isa. liii. 4, 6.

† Hebr. ix. 26; Revel. i. 5; 1 John i. 17.

‡ Rom. iii. 25; 1 John iv. 10; 1 John ii. 2.

|| Acts xx. 28; Matt. xx. 21; 1 Tim. ii. 6; 1 Corinth. vi. 20; Ephes. i. 7; Coloss. iii. 4; Revel. v. 9; 1 Peter i. 18.

“ hand of God. He appears in the presence of
 “ God for us. No man cometh to the Father but
 “ by him. He is able to save them to the utter-
 “ most who come unto God by him, seeing he
 “ ever liveth to make intercession for them. If
 “ any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,
 “ Jesus Christ the righteous. He is touched with
 “ the feelings of our infirmities, and therefore let us
 “ come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may
 “ find grace and mercy in the time of need*.”

III. We are further informed, that the Divine justice has been satisfied by the death of Christ.—“ His blood was shed for many for the remission
 “ of sins. Preach repentance and the remission of
 “ sins in his name, among all nations. Him hath
 “ God exalted with his right hand to be a prince
 “ and saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and
 “ forgiveness of sins. Through this man is preached
 “ to you the forgiveness of sins. To him give all
 “ the prophets witness, that, through his name,
 “ whosoever believeth in him shall have remission
 “ of sins. God was in Christ reconciling the world
 “ unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto
 “ them. In him we have redemption through his
 “ blood, even the forgiveness of sins †.”

* Ephes iv. 30; 1 Thess. v. 19; Luke xi. 13; Hebr. xii. 24; 1 Tim. ii. 5; Rom. viii. 34; Hebr. ix. 24; John xiv. 6; Hebr. vii. 25; 1 John i. 2; Hebr. iv. 14; Hebr. x. 22; Ephes. iii. 12; John iv. 14; Luke xix. 10; 1 John iv. 9; John xx. 31; 1 Thess. i. 20; John iii. 17; John xx. 31; 1 Thess. i. 10; John iii. 15; Rom. v. 9; Rom. vi. 23; 1 John v. 11; Hebr. ii. 10; Hebr. v. 9; Acts iv. 12.

† Luke iii. 3; Luke xxiv. 47; Acts v. 31; Acts ii. 38; Acts xiii. 38; Acts x. 43; 2 Corinth. v. 19; Ephes. i. 7; Ephes. iv. 12.

IV. Our sins being so forgiven, we are also said to be justified by Christ in the sight of God.—“ By him all that believe are justified. We are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus. We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. God had made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Even the righteousness of God; which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe *.”

V. Having been thus justified, we are reconciled to God.—“ Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Us, who were enemies, hath Christ reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death. He hath made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself. God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sin, that he might bring us unto God, and we are accepted in the beloved †.”

VI. Thus justified and reconciled, we are made partakers through Christ, of eternal life.—“ The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, to seek and, to save that which is lost; that we might live through him, that the world through him might be saved; that, believing, we might live through his name; that whosoever believeth

* Acts xiii. 39; 1 Cor. vi. 11; Rom. iii. 24; Rom. v. 9; 2 Corinth. v. 21; Rom. iii. 22.

† Rom. v. 10; Coloss. i. 21; Coloss. i. 20; 2 Corinth. v. 18; 1 Pet. iii. 18; Ephes. i. 6.

“ in him should not perish, but have everlasting
“ life. Through him we are saved from wrath. He
“ hath delivered us from the wrath to come. Eter-
“ nal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ
“ our Lord. God hath given us eternal life, and
“ this life is in his Son, who is the captain of our
“ salvation, the author of eternal salvation to all
“ them that obey him, neither is there salvation for
“ any other, for there is none other name under
“ heaven given among men whereby we must be
“ saved *.”

In this manner speak Evangelists and Apostles ; and they are not only in perfect accordance with each other, but with all the scriptures of the Old Testament which relate to the remedial sufferings and mediatorial character of Christ, and to the imperfection of the sacrifices and institutions of the Law. Nothing more, it would be thought, is wanting to justify the persuasion, that, in the divine oblation recorded in such express and emphatic terms, there is a peculiar, redeeming, and eternal, efficacy. The necessity, the reality, and the benefits, of this final atonement are, at once, proclaimed. A ransom, which neither the mind of man could conceive, nor his powers supply, is stated to have been paid. And Christ himself is exhibited, not as reconciling the world to God by the mere advocacy of his intercession, but as a sin-offering perfect in its nature, and, therefore, adequate to satisfy the purity of that supreme justice to which it was tendered, and by which it was required.

* John iv. 14 ; Luke xix. 10 ; 1 John iv. 9 ; John xx. 31 ; John iii. 17 ; 1 Thess. i. 20 ; John iii. 15 ; Rom. v. 9 ; Rom. vi. 23 ; 1 John v. 11 ; Hebr. ii. 10 ; Hebr. v. 9 ; Acts iv. 12.

The doctrine thus affirmed has been said to involve a mysterious complication of means, for the fulfilment of a purpose which might have been easily and speedily accomplished, by the single annunciation of amnesty to the sinner. Was it necessary, it is asked, that no less a person than the Son of God should descend from heaven, and take upon him our flesh; that he should live for many years in indigence and obscurity; that, during so many centuries of expectation, he should be the object of types and figures, of rites and prophecies, obscurely allusive to the peculiarities of his character, and the strangeness of his death; that he should endure a long series of indignities, sufferings, and wrongs, and be finally led by his persecutors to expire in agony on the cross;—was all this variety of contrivance, all this lengthened and multiplied instrumentality, all this mechanism so complicated and involved, necessary to effect the pardon of sin, which God might have granted by a single word? But though these questions were too profound for a satisfactory solution, it is not surely for man presumptuously to deny a fact stated like that of the death of Christ, merely because he cannot fully comprehend it. The ways of God are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. Though we be utterly unable to discover the fitness of the means he may employ to accomplish his designs, the fitness does not the less exist. In his ordinary providence he is often pleased to proceed by what would appear an intricate and circuitous process to attain his purpose. The tree which is to afford food and shelter for so many beings, is to spring slowly from the seed, and to reach the period of maturity after a long process of vegetation. The grain, which is to be-

come the food of man, is to lie buried for many months in the ground, and to spring up afterwards into the blade and the ear, before it can be applied to human sustenance. The clouds which are to descend in fertility upon the earth, and satisfy its thirst by dews and showers, are themselves to be fed by the process of evaporation, which depends, in its turn, on a complicated causation. Might not Almighty Power perfect the tree, and mature the seed, and nourish the earth, by incomparably more immediate and more simple means? And if, in these instances, as in a thousand others, he think proper to proceed in a manner less obvious and expeditious, shall we condemn his wisdom because he so acts? Or, admitting his wisdom in the application of the multiplied and progressive means by which the tree, the grain, and the cloud are produced, shall we reject the mercies of redemption because they also have been advanced and perfected by means progressive and multiplied*?

It has been also said, that repentance, in itself, would have been sufficient to expiate past offence, to satisfy the offended justice of God, and to avert from the sinner the divine displeasure. But repentance possesses no such saving efficacy; and neither reason nor scripture instructs us by what virtue it is to obliterate the stains of preceding guilt, to atone for the crime already perpetrated, and to reinstate us in the favour of God, whom we had insulted and averted by the sin of our disobedience.

What is repentance? A sorrow for sin, and a resolution to sin no more. This is our immediate and bounden duty. However it may prevent the future

* Porteus, Sermons, vol. ii. serm. 2.

transgression, it leaves former transgressions unatoned for, and unredeemed. Neither good resolutions nor good deeds, if there be any good, can annihilate what is past, or blot it out from the records of the Almighty. The noblest motives and the brightest virtues contain in themselves no superabundant merit, and possess no efficacy of retrospective redemption. We are at all times bound, by undeniable obligation, to resolve and act well, but we know not why the obligation fulfilled at one hour, should obliterate or ransom the pollutions contracted at another. The debt of the past remains to be paid; and we might with as much justice presume to hope that our present sins may find their expiation in our antecedent obedience, as that our present obedience may constitute the expiation of our antecedent sins.

He, indeed, who resolves and does well, resolves and does but what his duty requires; and the performances of duty cannot be considered as atonements for sin. Even if the repentance were such as to produce a state of moral perfection and unswerving obedience, we should not be authorized to ascribe to it a redeeming virtue, for we are told that "without shedding of blood there is no redemption*." But, though this were not the case, where may such repentance be found? The most humble and contrite of sinners mingles utter impurity with the purest oblations of his sorrow. The best penitence which he brings to the footstool of the Almighty, is not only subject to relapse and decay, but deeply tainted with the frailties of his corrupted nature; and the sole atonement he has to offer for his sins, stands itself

* Hebr. ix. 22.

in need of indulgence and of pardon. Let the transgressor analyse the materials of his most perfect offering, and then say what it is worth. Is he, when he tenders it, so purified from sin, and so perfect in motive, that no evil propensity, and no earthly passion, remain to beset and to pollute him? Has he subdued his heart, and all its rancour, and malice, and disorder, into the peace of holiness? Has he charity to forgive all things, and to love all men? Do his thoughts never wander beyond the boundary of duty, and his affections never devote themselves to the corruptions of the world? Does his heart, while it is animated by the spirit of brotherhood towards his neighbour, glow with the pure flame of piety and devotion towards God? If he cannot justly affirm that such is the temper of his soul, let him, then, determine whether he can safely trust in the sufficiency of his most perfect repentance, and safely reject the stay, the support, and the atonement of a crucified Saviour.

In consistency with this reasoning, something, besides repentance and reformation, has been always thought necessary to atone for sin. The common apprehension of mankind, in every age, has had recourse to various expedients to supply the conscious deficiency of penitential sorrow. Some lustration, some sacrifice, some expiation, were perpetually suggested, whatever might be the contrition of the sinner; to appease the offended justice of God; and several of the wisest and best men of ancient times have expressly declared, that there was yet required some universal means of delivering men's souls, which religion, and philosophy, and fear, and hope, had been unable to discover*.

* August. de Civit. Dei. lib. x. c. 32.

The repentance, then, and the righteousness of men, are inadequate, by their own efficacy, to procure the pardon of sin, and to restore a wicked and unthinking world to the favour of the Almighty ; and, this principle being established, who shall presume to say that the means supplied, according to the doctrine of the New Testament, are not the best and fittest that could be devised ? If a victim was to be offered, where could an adequate victim be found but in Him who voluntarily consented to die for our redemption ? If the sacrifice was to be proportioned to the magnitude of the offence, and the number of the offenders, why should it appear incredible that, when the inhabitants of a whole world, and, perhaps, of many systems of worlds, with all their generations to the end of time, were to be cleansed from guilt and, thereby, saved, the blood of Christ himself should be required to wash away stains of so great extent, so deep a dye, and so worthy of punishment ?

The Christian knows, indeed, and he admits, that, if this redemption be of the wisdom of God, it is “ the wisdom of God in a mystery*.” The finite powers of man cannot pretend to fathom the infinity of the divine purpose. “ We see through a glass darkly,” in the region of mysteries in which we live ; and every object around us includes difficulties which appear utterly inexplicable to the short-sighted faculties of the wisest and most inquisitive of human beings. Is there not mystery in the worm that crawls at our feet, in the blossom of spring, in the blade of grass, in every particle of dust on which we stand ? We cannot wonder, therefore, that we should be wholly unable to raise the veil

* 1 Corinth. xi. 12.

which conceals the sublime and awful mysteries of the atonement; and we might repress, in thankfulness for the mercies which have been conferred, the complaints of ignorance and presumption for the lights which have been withheld.

But all light is not withheld. Though the whole plan of the Almighty be not disclosed to our view, we may yet discover in the scheme of redemption such marks of divine wisdom and goodness, as may impress the mind with a mingled and wholesome sense of humility, of gratitude, and of love.

There are three lights in which the doctrine of atonement may be considered, the first as it respects God, the second as it refers to Christ, and the third as it concerns mankind.

I. Man, who was formed with so many high and noble powers, had lapsed from innocence. In becoming a sinner, he impaired and sullied the image of God in which he was created; subjected himself to the penalty which had been pronounced against sin; and, having dissolved the covenant which had existed between him and his Creator, in a manner to which heaven, and earth, and his own conscience, bore witness, was degraded to a condition of inferiority and of misery, and exposed, without hope, to the retributive decree of divine justice.

It was not himself only, and his immediate progeny, which the first sinner involved in the evils of crime. By the introduction of sin into the world, the whole moral order of things was deranged, and the dignity and happiness of human nature proportionally impaired. The disease and degeneracy of Adam were to be diffused through, and to taint, all future times; and not merely the parent sin was to be marked by the anger of God, but the sins

of which it was to become the seed through all the generations.

In this state of guilt and of degradation, what was to rescue man from the punishment which he had merited, and to restore the dignity of his nature, and the favour of heaven? God is perfect. His attributes never vary, and are never at variance with each other. His infinite justice, therefore, being offended by the voluntary lapse of his creatures, was not to be diverted by his gratuitous mercy, either from inflicting a proportional punishment, or requiring a proportional satisfaction. It will scarcely be affirmed, after transgression so aggravated and so presumptuous, that the divine authority should not be vindicated, and sustained. If honour and obedience should be paid to the laws of God, the infringement of the law requires a commensurate punishment. We cannot imagine that God demands obedience without intention to enforce it. It would appear to be contrary to his wisdom, and altogether inconsistent with his government, first to proclaim the law for the regulation of his creatures, and, then, to allow it to be insulted with impunity, by direct and wilful transgression. Such a proceeding would bring his ordinances and authority into equal contempt, would free the sinner from the apprehension of punishment, and would, consequently, encourage and sanction the continuance of transgression. It would be more. It would be utterly irreconcilable with the character of the Almighty, as Sovereign of the Universe, with his concern to maintain the eternal distinctions of good and evil, with the perfect purity and holiness of his nature, and with the whole order and economy of his providence. It may, therefore, be thought to follow, that sin and punishment are

necessarily united, and that, either the penalty of sin should be inflicted by the justice of the Sovereign, or the justice be satisfied by a full, sufficient, and perfect ransom.

But where was the ransom to be found? A race, alienated from God, lapsed from his favour, degraded in his eyes; a race which had voluntarily incurred the penalty of crime, and in which the traces of the divine image had been wholly, or almost wholly, obliterated by the most aggravated transgression; such a race was utterly incapacitated to raise itself from its ruins, and to furnish a propitiation in any wise worthy to be accepted by the equity of God. Yet, as the offence was by man alone, by man alone was the punishment to be endured, or redeemed; and as man was utterly unable to accomplish the redemption, he had nothing to expect but the infliction of the punishment. In this apparently remediless and hopeless state, the wisdom of God intervened to rescue and to save mankind. The sufficiency which human means could never have supplied, was conferred by divine interposition. A victim was produced, pure and precious, in proportion to the magnitude of the offence and the number of the offenders; and the blood of Christ, voluntarily shed upon the altar of God, was accepted as the satisfying ransom of the sins of man. But, it was not God who paid the ransom to himself, it was Christ, who, by purifying and perfecting our nature, rendered it capable of discharging the debt. The redeeming efficacy was supplied by the incarnate Son, and the propitiation was thus perfected which was to harmonize the equity and mercy of God, and, by satisfying the claims of the first, to justify the compassion of the last.

In this proceeding every thing seems to be in perfect accordance with all we know of the divine attributes, and all we can conceive of the divine consistency. God might have conferred a gratuitous and unpurchased pardon. Where, then, would have been his justice? He might have inflicted the punishment which had been merited. Where, then, would have been his mercy? In his mercy and justice, as in every other quality, he is perfect. Neither must his justice take any thing from his mercy, nor his mercy from his justice. The first required satisfaction, the last provided the means of paying it. The mercy was thus exalted, not by lessening, but by fulfilling the justice; and the justice was thus vindicated, by the accomplishment which it received from the interposition of mercy. Nothing but a perfect atonement could be accepted by the one; and nothing could supply the perfect atonement but the other. In this manner they wonderfully co-operated in the same work. That by which they were apparently to be separated, united and harmonized them in the same act, and, if we may so express it, magnified and heightened their common glory. That which seemed to be impossible to either, was accomplished by the concordant operation of both. Here lies the miracle of redemption. We behold attributes of the most opposite character, concurring to the same end; and man is saved, and God is justified, and the perfection of divine equity and divine compassion is exercised and displayed in one sublime and astonishing interposition.

It has been argued, that Christ submitted to suffering and to death for the purpose only of affording an undeniable confirmation to his doctrines; but man, as we are told, was to be reconciled to God

by a propitiatory sacrifice ; and, if a sacrifice was required, and, consequently, a victim to be found, where shall we look for the victim and the sacrifice, if we be not permitted to seek them on the cross !

And how beautiful, and how august, is the interposition which the oblation of the cross discloses to our view ! If the divine attributes were exercised in the creation of the world with unspeakable beneficence and power, we may behold them yet more glorified in the redemption of man, and more emphatically illustrative of divine perfection. In that act, mercy rejoiced against the rigor of judgment, and judgment triumphed by the administration of mercy. We see love laying the oblation at the feet of justice, and justice, having nothing left to demand, giving place to love. We see peace descending from heaven, and a world saved. In a word, we see the mantle of the righteousness of the Son of God thrown over the sins of the universe ; mercy, truth, holiness, and justice, meeting and embracing on the cross ; and the blood of a Redeemer propitiating for all times and for all nations, and, perhaps, for all worlds, the favour and acceptance of an offended God*.

* We are not without some authority in Scripture for the supposition that the benefits of the death of Christ extend beyond the inhabitants of this world. We are told that, as by Christ "all things were created that are in earth, visible and invisible ; and by him all things consist ; so by him also was God pleased (having made peace through the blood of his cross) to reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven : that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." Col. i. 16, 20 ; Ephes. i. 10. See Porteus, Sermon. vol. ii. sermon. 3.

In the accomplishment of this divine purpose, the means, I speak with reverence and humility, were worthy of the end, and the end of the means ; and both were a manifestation of the wisdom, the power, and goodness of the Almighty. What were the means ? A series of providential interpositions, operating through four thousand years, and connecting the sin of Adam with the sacrifice of the cross. What was the end ? Peace on earth, a renewal of the covenant of mercy between God and man ; the subjection of the powers of darkness, of sin, and of the grave. Viewing man in his first creation, we contemplate a being of high and splendid powers raised from the dust ; viewing him in his regeneration by redeeming mercy, we behold a being raised from the pollutions of guilt, and the penalty of death, to the heritage of heaven. In his first creation he was endowed with immortality, which was soon to be forfeited by disobedience and sin ; in his second, he was redeemed from disobedience and sin, to be restored to immortality. At his first creation, “ the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy ;” at his second, “ the angel of the covenant, the desire of all nations, the everlasting God,” came forth to reclaim that which was lost ; to re-glorify that which was polluted ; to re-animate, with the breath of eternal life, that which was dead in trespasses and sins ; and, finally, to accomplish, in the salvation of that which was ready to perish, the eternal counsels and infinite mercies of the Most High. Such is that miracle of redemption in which God has declared the majesty of his power, and the perfection of his mercy, to all generations. We contemplate it with reverence and awe, but with gratitude and love ; and, while we prostrate our-

selves with humility before the Almighty, our hearts ascend to him in adoration, in gratitude, and in praise.

The Apostle of the Gentiles, speaking of this august event, adopts the most glowing and animated language. According to him, "the dispensation which was accomplished in the fulness of times," united all things in Christ, and opened the pale of his church to the whole world. And from the same authority we learn, that this dispensation was to reach, in its efficacy, beyond the boundaries of earth, and the limitations of time; that the blessings which it confers are not confined solely to man of all generations from the beginning to the end of things; that the angels themselves rejoice in the pardon and peace which it has procured to the universe; and that, while it restores the order and happiness of moral existence, which had been interrupted and broken by the admission of sin into the world, it contributes to augment the harmonies, and to heighten the glories and felicities of heaven*.

II. If we now consider the scheme of redemption which has been so accomplished, in its reference to Christ, we may discover additional proofs of its utility and wisdom.

In a general view, the sufferings through which Christ has delivered us "from the bondage of corruption, unto the glorious liberty of the children of God;†" have entitled him, in a higher degree, to our reverence and our love; and while they perfected his claim to our obedience, by affording the most striking evidence of his mercy and goodness,

* Ephes. i. 10; and Hammond and Poole, in loco.

† Romans viii. 21.

and by instructing us that “ we are not our own, but
 “ are bought with the price of his death, to be made
 “ kings and high priests unto God and his Father;*”
 have afforded additional confidence to faith and hope,
 by exhibiting the graciousness of his intervention, for
 the accomplishment of the new covenant of accept-
 ance, in which so many patriarchs, and prophets, and
 legislators, and kings, had been occupied, under God,
 from the beginning of time. But, exclusive of the
 influence which they are thus calculated to produce
 on the best affections of the heart, they are, in a high
 degree, important, as they enabled Christ, first, to
 enforce by example the most difficult and essential
 of his own precepts, and, secondly, to demonstrate;
 by the most affecting testimony, his own sincerity
 and truth.

It was said by one philosopher, celebrated for his
 wisdom, that “ a man, to become a perfect pattern
 “ of truth and justice, and to be approved by God,
 “ must be subjected to the trials of affliction, de-
 “ prived of the blessings of this world, exposed to
 “ pain, to poverty, and to contempt, and whipped,
 “ tormented, and crucified as a malefactor†.” By
 another philosopher, at a later period, it was affirmed,
 “ that a man fit to reform the world, and to be the
 “ apostle and messenger of God, must be without
 “ home, deprived of all worldly accommodation,
 “ a public spectacle of misery and oppression, a uni-
 “ form example of patience and fortitude under the
 “ most calamitous sufferings‡.” Such a man was
 Christ. The station in which he was placed, and
 the object which he was to fulfil, required of him the
 exercise of the most heroic and the most indispen-

* 1 Corinth. vi. 19, 20; Rev. i. 5, 6.

† Plato. *Repub.* lib. ii.

‡ Arrian. In *Epictet.*

moment of his mission, to the last moment of the cross.

We are further to observe that the sufferings of Christ which were thus useful for edification and for example, were also to confirm the truth of his doctrines, and the sincerity with which he announced them. He had assumed an authority to rebuke and correct the transgressions of the world, and he was not only to be a teacher of universal righteousness, but the author of universal redemption. A religion, different, in many essential particulars, from every other which had hitherto been promulgated amongst men, was to be proclaimed by his voice and ratified by his authority; and a covenant of pardon and of peace between God and man, was to be perfected by the holiness and the mercy of his intervention. Under such circumstances, no slight evidences were necessary to substantiate the truth of his mission. If he had merely talked like other legislators, he might have been denominated a philosopher and a sage, but he would have afforded, at best, only an ambiguous and controvertible proof of the veracity of his pretensions. Even his miracles, if they had been the sole evidences of his authority, might have failed to convince the world. He fed the multitude in the wilderness, and he raised the dead, yet he had still to contend with the gibes of the scoffer, and the pertinacity of the infidel; and that which had been attributed, in his own days, to the power of Satan, might have been described and rejected, in subsequent times, as the contrivances of fraud for the maintenance of imposture. Christ, therefore, has added to the testimony of his wisdom and of his miracles, that of his example; and the truth of his mission

has been attested by the voluntary sufferings of his life and death. The sufferings might have been prevented by a timid and time-serving conciliation of the Jews, and by a more prudent and artful adaptation of his doctrines to the temper and corruption of the times. But, though, from the very first, he knew what was to be expected from the malice of men, and foresaw the humiliations and sorrows to which he should be exposed*, he still continued his course with fearless and uncompromising fortitude, and heroically opposed himself to the obstinacy and fanaticism which were finally to conduct him to the cross. Here, then, is the unswerving, unintimidated, unreluctant, and undissembling victim. Was it for falsehood that he suffered? Was it in fraud that he shed his blood? Was it to establish a system of delusion, that he voluntarily endured a life of trial, and a death of agony? Was it to sustain an imposture of which the fruits were to be contempt, calamity, and the cross, that he submitted to so many labours, privations, and sorrows?—In the hour of fear and danger, when their Master had perished and his enemies had triumphed, and when they knew they were exposed to the hostility and persecution of the rulers of the Jews, the disciples of Christ drew a different conclusion. Though, at first, alarmed and scattered by the death of their Master, they were soon inspired with better and higher thoughts. They again assembled. The authority of their Divine teacher was openly proclaimed, and the truth of his doctrines was affirmed and maintained. New converts were daily added to the Church. Persecution raged without effect. The

* John iii. 14; xii. 32, 33; xviii. 32.

proselyte said in his heart, " Truly this was the Son of God." Evangelists and Apostles went forth with renewed fervor, and heightened convictions; and the afflictions of Calvary, which, in the thoughts of men, were to overwhelm the religion by destroying its Founder, became, and were received as, a triumphant testimony of the sincerity of the Founder, and the truth of the religion.

III. The atonement which thus beautifully and perfectly accords with the divine attributes, and thus, in the sufferings which it involved, contributed to confirm the authority of Christ, deserves, perhaps, scarcely less consideration in its reference to the moral and intellectual improvement of human nature. Man, reasonably distrusting the efficacy of repentance and sacrifice, can scarcely permit himself to hope that the justice of God may be induced to spare the crime by the imperfect sorrows and cheap oblations of the criminal. But he has nothing more precious and acceptable to offer; and the doctrine of redemption, which affords a remedy for his distress, becomes, even in this light, a source of holy consolation and hope. The Gospel, however, in its details of the mercy of atonement, opens other, and not less elevating, views; and, while it excites and sanctions the most animating and salutary motives, awakens and exercises the best affections of the heart. Can we believe that the sufferings and sacrifice of such a personage as Christ were required for the expiation of our sins, without regarding sin as a hateful and fearful thing, and without looking up with wholesome awe to the justice of God? Can we contemplate the love of Christ in shedding his blood for us, without emotions of gratitude for the inestimable blessings which we have received from

his death? Can we recollect the condemnation and misery from which we have been redeemed by the oblation of the cross, without pious acknowledgments for our deliverance, and affectionate reverence for Him who delivered us? Can we consider ourselves as instrumental by our sins to the sufferings of Calvary, and as deriving our ransom from the very sorrows occasioned, in part, by our own delinquency, without solemn and holy resolutions, and without that self-humiliation which prostrates the heart before the Almighty? Such views, and such sentiments, instruct, admonish, and purify, the mind of man. They have a tendency not only to subdue within us the unholy desires generated by the world, but to establish, in their place, all those holy persuasions which commune with the Almighty. They operate upon the feelings and passions of the bosom with a regenerating power, correcting the evil, and quickening, strengthening, and confirming the good. They are the seeds which, falling into a good soil, bring forth the wholesome fruits of sorrow for crime, of evangelical obedience, and of hope, of love, and of confidence towards God.

Were we instructed in the sublime truths of a saving religion by precept and doctrine only, we should acknowledge the benevolence of the instructor with gratitude and affection. But, here, to the precept and doctrine is superadded that which gives them a more powerful efficacy, and impresses them more deeply in the heart. We are taught, not by speech, but by vision. The high attributes of the Almighty, his omniscience, his justice, his holiness, and his mercy, are exhibited to us, it may be said, in a perceptible and visible form. We behold them in their majesty and beauty, while they accomplish their work by

the ministry of Christ; and they appear to us, on the cross in the substantial glory of living action, and in the grandeur and loveliness of redeeming power. It is thus the Deity is rendered more intelligible to our hearts. It is thus that our affections and reverence are purified from the dross of earthly corruption, and that we are familiarized with the perfections of the Most High, in order that we may learn to conform to his likeness, and prepare to enter into his joy.

When the disciples beheld the transfiguration of Christ, and heard the divine voice which bore testimony to his mission, they bowed down in humility and wonder, and entreated that they might be permitted to make a tabernacle, and to sojourn in the brightness of their Master's presence. They witnessed the visible evidence of divine authority in the celestial splendours which irradiated the form and face of the Son of God, and they exulted and adored. But Christ, in his sufferings and his death, was transfigured, for our instruction and salvation, into a higher glory. His garments did not glisten like the sun. His countenance did not shine forth as the light. But he was arrayed in the brighter lustre of goodness, of mercy, and of love. He stretched forth his arms, with divine compassion, to embrace the universe. The cross was the throne from whence he poured out salvation on times and nations, on the present, the future, and the past. The exclamation was heard, "It is finished!" And, at that moment, the satisfaction of sin was perfected, and a spectacle was exhibited which involved and ratified the eternal interests of the world. The shrines of the idolator were overthrown. The darkness which had fallen upon the earth was cleared up. Sin and death delivered up their chains; and the children of men, and the

angels of heaven, rejoiced. Is there, in such a manifestation of divine goodness, no instruction for the understanding and the heart? Are no high thoughts, no reverential awe, no deep and indelible sense of supreme mercy, to be awakened and impressed by so sublime a vision? And is it of no import to faith and righteousness, that God, clothed in our form, and presented to our senses, has thus displayed himself in his most gracious character, and thus enforced the written precepts of his wisdom, by the visible interposition of his mercy?

The divine goodness had not previously refused to instruct mankind by precept and command. That which might, in some degree, have been learned from the manifestation of the divine attributes in the works of creation, was further taught by the voice which spoke, in admonition and doctrine, to Adam, to Moses, and to the Prophets. But the language was ineffectual which was thus addressed to the sinner, and wisdom was rejected though it issued from heaven. By what new method were to be softened the hardness and stubbornness of our nature! How was the danger of sin to be more strikingly and unequivocally demonstrated! Whence were to be supplied more forcible convictions of the necessity of obedience, and the penalty of the crime! Behold the cross, and read the lesson. Can the sinner look there and close his eyes against the enormity of sin? Can he hope to evade that justice which so descended on the Son of God? Can he be insensible to the danger of guilt which has been so pathetically announced? Is there no tongue to call him back to duty, in the blood which has been thus shed? Or could any appeal be made to his understanding, his affections, his hopes, or his fears, more striking, more penetrating,

or more powerful, than that which is sensibly conveyed in the sufferings of Calvary, and in the temper with which they were endured?

How comparatively unimpressive would be the precept and the pardon, if they had not been enforced and ratified by the blood-shedding of this atonement! It is this atonement which strengthens the precept, renders the pardon more precious, and brings both home, by the most striking evidence, to the bosom of man. We measure affection by the sufferings which it endures on our account, and by the good which it confers upon us. We measure justice by the undeviating rectitude with which it proclaims and executes the law. In the sacrifice of the cross we possess these criterias of the divine love, and the divine equity. The pardon gratuitously conferred might be considered as the act of an arbitrary will, the favour which granted the pardon as the effect of unmerited compassion. But a redemption of price, a redemption purchased by so many sorrows, and by such a death, addresses to the heart a demonstration, equally intelligible and affecting, of the unbounded mercy with which it was planned, and the perfect justice with which it was accomplished. Without such a demonstration, we might have obtained a knowledge of the abstract and moral character of God, from the deductions of reason, and the language of Scripture; but the evidence of the cross, appealing at once to our senses and our understanding, exhibits the Almighty in the very exercise of his most sublime and most gracious attributes, for the most sublime, and most gracious purpose. The precept is not here uttered, but preceptive sufferings are here beheld. No voice is heard, but the spectacle addresses itself, with more than voice, to the earth and to the heavens.

It is not man forgiven whom we are led to contemplate, so much as man purchased by the treasures of unbounded goodness. It is not the pure and just judge to whom our eyes are directed, but the pure and just judge identified with the affectionate and saving parent. It is not the inspiration of Deity that speaks from the lips of evangelists and apostles for our edification, but Deity himself that descends upon the earth, to teach, by visible interposition, what He is, and what we should be. Let the sinner pause here. Has he the feelings of sympathy within him? Has he any compassion for unmerited suffering? Has he any love of goodness in his heart? Has he any gratitude for goodness expiring for his salvation? Has he any respect for justice which demands the sacrifice by which he is to be justified? He will feel them here. With the sorrows of the cross he will remember the offensiveness of sin by which they were caused. He will contemplate the wonders of Calvary with a regenerated spirit. He will weep, repent, be thankful, and adore.

But this is not all. Pardon was not the only thing necessary to the sinner. Man had ceased to obey, to love, and to resemble his Creator, and had, thereby, not only forfeited all claim to divine favour, but contracted the disease of sin, which, communicating infirmity and impurity to the soul, utterly incapacitated it for the enjoyment of happiness. To a being thus corrupted and impaired in his faculties and powers, mere pardon would have been without efficacy; for the evil would have remained, after the forgiveness had been granted. The pardon, therefore, to be adequate to the restoration of the offender to himself and to God, was to be something more than a declaration of amnesty; and the heart was to

be subdued and purified, before the salvation could be perfected. Here, then, we discover a new mercy in the scheme of our redemption. Instead of a cheap, common and unbought forgiveness, a forgiveness is announced which involves whatever is most likely to make a suitable impression on the spirit of the sinner, and to restore the health which guilt had destroyed. Justice is displayed, to deter from crime. Mercy is exercised, to awaken gratitude. Goodness is effused, to kindle love. The children of transgression are invited, with divine compassion, to return, and reconcile themselves, to God; and the holy affections which are thus addressed, and thus kindled, commence the restoration of the divine image in the soul of the sinner, and capacitate him for the full enjoyment of the blessings of pardon.

In this manner was wrought the miracle of redemption. There was no schism in the attributes of the Almighty. All was in perfect consistency with the perfection of his nature. The plans of mercy, instead of dissolving the eternal connexion of sin and misery, left that connexion still certain, and afforded the most striking evidence that it was so. The danger of the sinner was demonstrated by the very act which was to ratify his pardon. By the very love which provided the sacrifice, was proclaimed the justice by which the sacrifice was required. All that is awful was mingled, in the same interposition, with all that is gracious and good. The majesty of the divine nature, is softened by the radiance of divine mercy. The sinner, therefore, is left to ponder over no abstract idea, and to deduce his inferences from no vague and unsatisfying impression, of the character of God. He is taught by what he sees, and he sees, exemplified in action, the necessity of re-

nouncing the sins which beset him, and of conforming himself by obedience to the divine will. If he yet remain unregenerate, he does so in direct defiance of the purposes of God, and of that manifestation of the cross which addresses him with more than a voice from the dead, and which, if he had a heart, would be heard and felt.

With these views opened before him, what does the sinner want for his edification? He recognises the extent of his guilt, and the interest which the divine complacency condescends to take in his welfare. The voice which had announced his punishment, is heard to proclaim his pardon. He beholds a hand stretched out from heaven, to withdraw him from the gulf on the border of which he stands. The darkness of his despondency is touched and brightened by a ray from above. He has no more to shed the inefficacious blood of bulls and of goats, no more to trust to the doubtful offerings of frankincense and myrrh, and no more to rest his hope of acceptance on the frailty and feebleness of his own righteousness. The righteousness of Christ is transferred to him, and accepted for him. His convictions assume a better and a holier character. He fears, but it is without dismay. He trusts, but it is without presumption. He believes, and is saved.

Are we, then, asked, what influence these views of atonement are calculated to exercise on the religious faculties of man?—The answer will not be difficult. We see unmerited and infinite love clearly and distinctly revealed. But this love is not an arbitrary and indiscriminating affection. It is a love which beautifully harmonizes with the holiness of the Almighty. It is a love enthroned in the mercy-seat of heaven, and which, coincident with eternal justice, has opened to the universe the fountains of

peace, of hope, and of salvation. Such is the great principle, and such is the character of God, developed in the atonement. What, therefore, shall be felt by him who looks up with faith to the sufferings of the cross? Shall he not bow down in humble acknowledgment for the blessing he has received? Shall he not be awakened to a deep and holy sense of the ingratitude of sin? Shall he not be cheered and strengthened in his pilgrimage by confidence in the mercy which has reconciled him to his Maker? Shall not his love ascend in adoration to Him by whom he is so much beloved? And shall not his heart glow with brotherly affection towards those his fellow creatures, who, subject to the same condemnation with himself, have been saved by the same hand which was stretched out for his own salvation, and conducted to the same tabernacle of hope in which he himself is given to abide? Going forth in this temper, and with these emotions, from the scene of Calvary, he shall be prepared to contend with and to subdue the evil spirit of the world. The groundwork shall be laid in his heart, of all virtues and all graces, evangelical and moral. He may sometimes slumber and sleep in the infirmity of his nature; but he shall possess, in his own bosom, a source of high thoughts and inspiring motives; and he shall proceed, with alacrity and trust, to finish the race which is set before him, and to assure to himself, through Christ his Saviour, the crown which is promised to every upright and faithful disciple of the Gospel.

The beauty, sublimity, and influence, of the whole New Dispensation, are intimately connected with these views of the doctrine of Atonement. If Christ be regarded as a mere man commissioned only to reprove and enlighten the world, his sufferings and

death must be considered as, comparatively, of little importance to mankind. We should, on such a supposition, possess no adequate measure of the justice and benevolence of God, no sufficient testimony of the heinousness and danger of sin, no decisive evidence of the divine pardon ; and there would have been no sensible and palpable representation of the character of the Almighty, and no visible interposition of his purity and justice, to give efficacy to precept, and to bring it home to the heart. The lofty language in which both the Old and the New Testament advert to the death of Christ, as a sacrifice essentially necessary to the salvation of man, would become little more than high sounding and unmeaning words ; and that cross, which angels are said to contemplate with amazement and awe, would be regarded rather as an evidence of the sin by which it was erected, than an august display of the co-operation of the divine attributes for the restoration, the peace, and the happiness of the world. Whereas, from the doctrine of atonement, every page of the gospel derives new force, and a new sanction. The lofty allusions to the sufferings of Christ are sustained and verified. The ideas which we are taught to entertain of the character of God, elevate and purify our affections ; and the Gospel, instead of being a mere scheme of preceptive wisdom, enforced by severity of command, or by unpurchased amnesty, and involving more feeble and less affecting motives ; appears to be a scheme which, laying the foundation of faith and of obedience in the heart, and at once illustrating the divine mercy, and vindicating the divine justice, is calculated, while it excites the best and purest of all affections, to remove that distemperatur of sin which mere amnesty could

not heal, and which, until healed, must involve the misery, the degradation, and the punishment of the sinner.

How many awful and affecting considerations, then, are involved in the expiring exclamation of Christ—It is finished!—At that moment the face of nature was changed. The earth quaked. The grave yielded up its dead. The sun was darkened. And the throne of the powers of hell was overthrown. At that moment, too, the disorder and derangement of the whole moral world were repaired. The purposes of Grace, manifested to the Father, were fulfilled; and the dispensations made to a chosen people were perfected by a more ample and more glorious revelation. All that the prophets had foretold of a Prophet to come greater than they, and of a new religion to be sealed by his blood, and exemplified by his life, was finally verified. All that was required to propitiate the Deity, and to save the sinner, was visibly accomplished. The sacrifice was offered. The atonement was made. The gates of the paradise of heaven were opened to a redeemed and accepted world. A new tree of life sprang up and tendered its fruits to all nations; and the voice of invitation issued from the Gospel,—“Take, eat, and live for ever!”

Compared with this atonement, so sublime in the long series of divine interposition by which it was preceded; so gracious and merciful in the saving influence which it was to extend to all generations of men; and so august, so affecting, and so awful, in the views which it discloses of the nature of God; how little and how worthless appear the most perfect devices of all other religions to satisfy the justice of the Almighty, and to absolve the sinner from the

penalty of sin! The ablution and the sacrifice, the ceremony and the fast, the pilgrimage and the penance, may attest the belief of the transgressor that some expiation is necessary for the transgression; but redemption is not to be bought at so vile a price. The observances of superstition are worthless in their nature, and, therefore, unprofitable in their effects; and are but the frail expedients which fear adopts with feeble and ambiguous hope, or the fallacious resources to which the sinner applies in his distress, because he knows of no better means to appease the terrors of conscience. How can such things procure life to a world that is dead? If they contain nothing in their own nature worthy of divine acceptance, how shall they be of efficacy "to take away sin," and to restore the peace of the guilty, by restoring them to God? If they be too poor to ransom the individual transgressor, how shall they redeem all past, present, and future generations, and reconcile mercy to unnumbered criminals with justice to their unnumbered crimes? Whereas, in the atonement by Christ, whatever of mystery it may involve, a perfect satisfaction is offered to the insulted majesty of God. The ransom is as precious, as the sins to be ransomed are unbounded and offensive. Man is consequently saved. The apparently conflicting attributes of God are reconciled; and a new order of grace, and mercy, and pardon, is finally and effectually established upon everlasting foundations.

But let it not be supposed that the sinner who has been thus redeemed, may persevere with impunity in sin. The penalty which he had incurred is paid. The way which had been closed against him is opened. The heaven, which he had forfeited by his rebellion, is restored. But it is with himself to re-

ject the offer, and perish; or to accept it, and live. The Gospel, instead of affording hope for the encouragement of his transgression, affords it only for the encouragement of his obedience. The amnesty by which he is to be saved, is an amnesty of covenant, and the covenant includes, on his part, righteousness, holiness, and faith. The sinner, therefore, unless he forsake his sins, must await their punishment. From him, if incorrigible and obstinate in his course of guilt, has departed the grace of that redeeming mercy, which descends in health, and comfort, and trust, on the children of obedience. He has rejected the offer of divine goodness. What remains but the verdict of divine justice?

We need scarcely inquire how far, to the pure and holy, the redemption of the Gospel is, peace and hope. If they behold the justice of God in the satisfaction which has been made for sin, they behold also the mercy by which the satisfaction has been accomplished. If they look with awe to the cross of Christ, they may look also with humble and confiding trust. They are admonished, indeed, of the danger of guilt, but they are instructed in the promises which confirm their obedience. The reverence and love kindled in their hearts by the blessings which they have received, contribute to restore within them the likeness of God, and proportionally to confirm and augment their happiness. In all circumstances they may recollect with gratitude by whose blood they were bought; and in prosperity they may heighten and hallow their enjoyments, in adversity soothe and tranquillize their afflictions, in temptation renew and confirm their strength, in death fortify and cheer their spirit, by those inspiring anticipations which the atonement of Christ has autho-

rized them to indulge, and which affords them a foretaste on earth of the happiness of heaven.

The redemption of the Gospel, then, we may now, perhaps, be permitted to conclude, is not wholly a mystery, incomprehensible to the affections and the understandings of men. As it refers to God, it harmonizes his justice with his mercy, and affords an intelligible and beautiful comment on the most awful, alike, and the most gracious of his attributes. With respect to Christ, it afforded him occasion to exemplify and confirm his precepts by a life of trial, and a death of ignominy and sorrow. In its reference to mankind, it supplies the saving efficacy which was to be found neither in the imperfection of their repentance, nor in the vanity of their oblations. If, in its cause and consequences, it be not wholly revealed to the ignorance of human, or perhaps, to the wisdom of angelic, beings, it discloses to us the remedy of transgression; the graciousness of the new covenant; the love which has redeemed, and justified, and accepted, the sinner; the full and perfect accomplishment of the types and figures of preceding ages; and the satisfaction which, accepted by the equity of God, has ransomed the sins of the whole world. In this sublime manifestation, an appeal is made, not merely to the reason, but to the senses, of man. We are addressed by facts, by visible objects, by the procession to Calvary, by the wonders of the cross. All that is awful is united for our edification with all that is beneficent and good. The heart of the sinner is warned of the danger of sin, and the necessity of reformation; a new solemnity is lent to pardon, a new force to precept, a new strength to motive, a new and more binding efficacy to obligation; and sure and adequate grounds, sup-

plying the deficiency of all other religions, are afforded for hope, to confirm the righteous ; for fear, to restrain the guilty ; for confidence, to support the afflicted ; for faith, to enlighten and strengthen the ignorant and weak ; and for that holy and sublime conviction, which, illuminating and evangelizing the spirit and the heart, recognises, in God, the parent, and, in Christ, the friend and the redeemer, not of a party or of a sect, of Christian or of Jew, but of the human race throughout all generations, from the birth to the end of time. Such is the atonement of the Gospel, in its nature, its object, and its effects. Sacrifices, penances, pilgrimages, and lustrations, the hopeless expiations of guilt, have passed away. Types and shadows are no more. The promises of early days are realized. And the trust of man, so long resting on the vain satisfaction of his own oblations, is directed to an offering which human wisdom was equally inadequate to suggest or to provide, and which is coextensive, in its efficacy, with the disorders to be remedied, and the sins to be redeemed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FOUNDERS AND TEACHERS OF RELIGION.

SECT. I.

The founders and teachers of the religion of Greece—Bards and priests—Their doctrines confirmed by subsequent legislators—The mode of teaching inadequate—Precept unaided by example—Religion unsanctioned by due authority—Both equally unsustained by the character and conduct of their authors.

THE early bards of Greece were its religious legislators. They copied, methodized, or embellished, the mythology of Egypt and of the East, and interwove with the materials which they borrowed, allegorical fables, and poetic tales, of their own creation. Each, in his turn, added something to the diversified but splendid tissue. The phenomena of nature were converted into gods. The hero, or robber, who wandered abroad for occasions of war and spoil, was to increase, in due time, the number of divinities; and Olympus was to be converted into a mighty temple for the reception of a crowd of alien deities, naturalized by the tolerating spirit, and classified by the fertile fancy, of the poet who imported them.

Orpheus, Homer, and Hesiod, were among the priestly bards who conveyed the polytheism thus framed and decorated to the Greeks. In accomplishing this work, they, sometimes, demonstrated a felicity of fancy, and even a taste and wisdom, which

merit, and have excited, the applause of mankind. If there was superstition, it was clothed in the most becoming and fascinating garb ; if error, it was contrasted by precepts and institutions which might justly reach and influence the heart. But truth was often deserted for imagination, or overwhelmed by a mass of absurdity and incoherence. The teacher, hurried away by the enthusiasm of an ungovernable fancy, or himself tainted by the creed which he announced, infused into his system the wildest and most pernicious dogmas ; and, thus, a religion was gradually produced, if a religion it may be called, in which the moral was rare, and the inconsistency and contradiction unparalleled, except, perhaps, in the holy romance of Hindu idolatry.

Legislators of so frail a character, were not calculated to become useful preceptors of mankind. They affected, indeed, to have been taught by inspirations from heaven, and to teach, in their turn, what had been thus inspired. But they were poets not moralists, priests to conduct the populace of their day to the altars of superstition, not instructors to inculcate the necessity, and the obligation, of piety and virtue. The precepts of practical wisdom which they announced, were scattered, parsimoniously and incidentally, through their songs ; but they perpetually recurred to the pernicious dogmas of their idolatry, or exhausted their genius in recording and embellishing the vices of their gods. In their capacity as public teachers, they were governed by no regular and benevolent design, and, apparently, by no wish, but that of engaging the passions, and winning the applause, of the multitude whom they addressed. They struck their lyre with spontaneous fervour in the assemblies of the populace, or in the

halls of the great ; and poured forth their extemporaneous rhapsodies, with unequalled and inexhaustible fancy, to their delighted countrymen ; but, if they contributed to subdue and modify the half-civilized temper of their times, they were indebted for this praise to the fascinating harmony of their verse, and the superstitious awe which they impressed ; and not to any earnest and well-directed zeal to correct the vices, illuminate the ignorance, and reform the manners of mankind.

They were invested, it was said, or they invested themselves, with the authority of heaven. The Gods protected, and the Muses inspired them ; and they were followed and venerated under the twofold character of poet and of priest ; of priest, to sanction, and of poet to diffuse, the tenets of their creed. From this double character they derived an influence which reached to all Greece. The forests and the rocks, it was said, exulted as they sung ; the city was surrounded with unwonted walls ; and the hitherto wild and untamed savage became, as miraculously, social and humane. Yet, however their cotemporaries may have applauded or been civilized by their songs, the benefit, moral or religious, is equivocal or slight. Of the idolatry which they recommended and decorated with so much pomp and beauty of language, it will scarcely be affirmed that it did not pervert the reason and corrupt the practice of the people ; and the academic philosopher who so indignantly excluded their works from his republic, has not merited, by doing so, the imputation of a very severe, or a very fastidious moralist.

Whether those extraordinary men confirmed, by exemplifying, their precepts, and demonstrated by an accordant life the sincerity of their faith, we are

no where told. From the immortality of their name we have no reason to infer the purity of their virtues. They were, in most instances, perhaps, itinerant bards, who were to depend on the favour of their delighted auditors ; and, certainly, neither to the excellence of their example, nor to the grandeur and disinterestedness of their views, nor to the fervour of their zeal for public good and popular edification, was any appeal made by their cotemporaries or their successors, for the confirmation of their authority, or the sanction of their creed.

The religion itself which they borrowed or adorned for the guidance of their countrymen, may afford sufficient proof that they were not preeminently distinguished by the moral dignity of their character. They who, wilfully or ignorantly, infused into their creed so many and such pernicious absurdities, by their creed may be judged ; and, if the faith which they prescribed, continued to be maintained and cherished after their decease, it was not because it derived authority from the wisdom or the virtues of those who taught it, but because popular credulity seldom thinks or inquires, and is generally lavish of belief, in proportion to the vileness and vitiousness of the dogmas which it is required to embrace.

SECT. II.

The founders of religion in India—Vyasa, Crishnu, Brahma, the fourteen Menus—The character of all lost in the darkness, or degraded by the absurdity, of fable—No useful exemplification of the precepts, and no sufficient authority for the ordinances of the religion.

THE authority of the law depends on the authority of the lawgiver; and, if he who announces the rule be impotent to sanction and to enforce it, the rule will be proportionally despised or disobeyed. The legislators, therefore, who fabricated the religions of the Pagan world, have uniformly attributed their doctrines to the inspiration of the gods, and endeavoured to clothe their ignorance in the mantle, and to confirm their creeds by the command, of heaven. Some auspicious genius, some faithful Egeria, some descending deity, some messenger from the skies, communicated to them the dogmas of celestial wisdom, and sent them forth to teach and to reform mankind. The multitude were instructed, that, in observing the precept, they obeyed, not so much the mortal who announced, as the God who inspired, it; and the foundations of the altar and of the temple were thus laid in the inventions of fable, or the impositions of fraud.

The Vedas constitute the principal of the sacred books of the Hindus. They are generally classed under three heads, including the doctrine of works, of faith, and of worship. But they contain, in their innumerable pages, the principles of all human knowledge, and are therefore denominated in the Gita, the leaves of that holy tree to which the Al-

mighty himself is piously compared *. By the philosopher Vyasa, they were collected from the traditionary tales of his country, and arranged in their present form ; but we know nothing of the character of the sage who devoted his days to this labour of compilation, save only that he appealed, like other legislators, to the authority of heaven, and prudently traced to the omniscience of Brahma, the doctrines which flowed from the exhaustless source of his own fancy, or which he borrowed from predecessors as little inspired as himself †.

But the celestial Brahma was not to monopolize the glory of bringing down the wisdom of heaven for the instruction of men. Crishnu, himself, aspired to the honour of a teacher of the world. The history of his deeds on earth, of his rural sports, his adventures of love‡, and his triumphs over demons and monsters who had plagued mankind, was closed by the final destruction of his enemies, in the war which the poet of the Mahabarat has described with such holy zeal, and such patient minuteness. He was not yet, however, to return to his native skies. It was necessary he should leave behind him a body of laws for the edification of his people ; he, therefore, composed the instructions on the nature of God and of the soul, and on the principles and obligations of virtue, which are comprized in the Gita ; and, having communicated

* " The wise have called the incorruptible One an Aswatt'ha, with its roots above and its branches below, the leaves of which are the sacred measures. He who knows this tree, knows the Vedas." Selection of Dissertations from the Asiatic Researches.

† Appendix, Note I. I. I.

‡ They constitute a perfect romance. Sir William Jones has adverted to them in his Essay on the Gods of Greece and Italy.

them to the pious and favoured Arjoon, the worthy depositary of his wisdom, he at length resumed his primeval seat in the blissful regions of Vainantha*.

Like Arjoon, Satyavrata, the child of the sun, and the monarch of the whole earth, was to be illuminated by celestial wisdom, that he, in his turn, might illuminate mankind. After a lapse of ages, Brahma, it seems, desired repose. During his slumber the demon Ayagriva approached, and stole the four Vedas which had flowed from the four mouths of the god. Heri, the preserver of the universe, observed and punished the deed. The monster was slain; and the recovered Vedas were deposited with the child of the sun, after he had been instructed by the triumphant god, in the nature and character of the Supreme Being, in the essence and qualities of the soul, and in the principles of piety, of policy, and of morals †.

The teacher of the Shasta itself, that "sublime and immortal code," on which so much praise has been so wantonly lavished, is the being of a fable equally incredible and wild. The angels of heaven had rebelled, and the prisons of Andero, the region of darkness and of sorrow, were crowded with the offenders, by the omnipotent wrath which they had merited and provoked. The unhappy band were subsequently subjected to a long series of purifying migrations ‡, and, having been, at length, trans-

* Sir William Jones. Ib. † Sir William Jones. Ib.

‡ The period of probation was divided into four jogues or ages, the first extending to 100,000 years, the second to 10,000, the third to 1,000, and the fourth to 100. Holwel, Feasts and Fasts of the Hindus, p. 56.

ferred to human forms, were about to be restored to the dignity of their first creation, when they again fell, and were again menaced with the retributions of Andero*. But celestial compassion knows no bounds. The Almighty consented that a regular body of written laws should be framed for the admonition and direction of the delinquents; and Brahma, being selected to execute the decree of mercy, descended upon earth, translated the precepts which he was to communicate into Sanscrit; delivered the code in a written form to the lapsed intelligences; enforced, by holy and affectionate remonstrance, the conditions and doctrines which it contained; and returned, after a long and laborious mission, to the eternal dwellings of the blessed.

Exclusive of these celestial legislators, there were fourteen Menus who had received from heaven an authoritative commission to instruct mankind, but whose story is involved or lost in the obscurity of fable. All of them are said to have added abundantly, each in his turn, to the great mass of national superstition, and to have embellished, or deformed, the whimsical structure of Hindu worship. The fame which has immortalized them as public teachers inspired by the gods, has not preserved the knowledge of their individual virtues; but from one of them, we know, are derived the "Institutes of Menu," a work which seems to be little more than a compilation of the most trifling, and the most sanguinary, ordinances of the Hindu religion; and which, however it may occasionally be occupied with lessons of piety and virtue, is devoted, almost in every page, to the most extravagant and minute

* Holwel, *Feasts and Fasts of the Hindus*.

details of the modes of sacrifice, the forms of ablution, the rites of purification, and the various privileges and distinctions of Castes. If we advert to it for a moment, we may be enabled to estimate the claim of its author to the character and the honour of a religious legislator.

“ Let the names of women be agreeable, soft,
“ clear, captivating the fancy, auspiciously ending
“ in long vowels, resembling words of benediction—
“ If the tonsure, and investiture of a child with the
“ mark of his class, be not performed according to
“ rule, the child becomes an outcast with whom no
“ Brahmin can form connexion, nor maintain inter-
“ course—The staff of the priest must be of such
“ a length as to reach his hair, of the soldier to reach
“ his forehead, of the merchant his nose ; and the staff
“ must be straight, without fracture, and uninjured
“ by fire—The beggar, if he seek long life, must eat
“ what he receives, in charity, with his face to the
“ East ; if he seek fame, with his face to the South ;
“ if prosperity, to the West ; if truth and its rewards,
“ to the North ; and, if he eat with respect, his food
“ shall produce power ; if irreverently, destructive
“ consequences—A Brahmin is purified by water
“ that reaches his bosom, a Cshatriya by water as-
“ cending to his throat, a Vaisya by water taken
“ at his mouth, a Sudra by water touched with the
“ extremity of his lips—A twice-born man who shall
“ repeat to himself a thousand times the holy text
“ Om, shall be released in a month from a great
“ offence ; but he must not marry a girl with reddish
“ hair, nor with deformed limbs, nor with inflamed
“ eyes, nor of much speech, nor of the name of a
“ river, a tree, a monster, or a snake—No expiation
“ remains for the crime of him who illegally drinks

“ the moisture of a Sudra’s lips—Physicians, sellers
 “ of meal, such as live by low traffic, men with
 “ whitlows on their fingers, feeders of cattle, he
 “ who hath lost an eye, a navigator of the ocean,
 “ an oil-man, a maker of bows and arrows, must be
 “ shunned—Food given to a seller of moon-plant,
 “ becomes ordure in another world ; to a physician,
 “ purulent blood ; and the giver will be a reptile
 “ bred within them—A Brahmin, who keeps house,
 “ must not step over a string by which a calf is
 “ tied ; nor look at his own image in the water ;
 “ neither eat with his wife ; nor look at her eating,
 “ or sneezing, or yawning, or sitting carelessly at
 “ her ease, or setting off her eyes with black
 “ powder, or scenting herself with essences—The
 “ Vedas must not be read on prohibited days, nor
 “ in the presence of a Sudra, nor in lightning, rain,
 “ thunder, storm, nor in the presence of an aguish
 “ person, nor near a cemetery, nor while jackalls
 “ yell, or asses, or camels, bray—A wise man must
 “ say what is true, but let him say what is pleasing ;
 “ he must utter no disagreeable truth, and no agree-
 “ able falsehood ; this is a primæval rule*.”

Of the legislator who lent the authority of his
 name to such doctrines as these, and thus directed
 the attention of his followers from what was just and
 right, to what was insignificant or absurd, we may
 easily reject the pretensions and the claims. Among
 the other founders, to whom we have adverted, of
 the religion of Hindu, may we discover a higher
 character ? Did that religion derive any just autho-
 rity, or legitimate sanction, from the wisdom and
 the virtues of personages, most of whom were the

* Laws of Menu. Works of Sir William Jones, vol. vii. viii.

monstrous progeny of fable, and worthy only of a place in Oriental romance? Do we discover in Brahma, in Crishnu, or in Heri, the wisdom or the example which might contribute to confirm the doctrines which they preached? Or may we not be permitted to conclude, that the legislators to whom the Hindu creed has been ascribed by Hindu superstition, were, if considered as gods, falsified and burlesqued by the fancied modes of their intervention, and, if as men, unqualified, except by assumption, by fanaticism, or by folly, for the high office of moral and religious instructors of the world?

SECT. III.

The founder of the Koran—His character—Early timidity, and reserve—Progressive boldness and authority—No consistency—Subtle and temporizing conciliation of the Arab tribes—Adaptation of doctrine and precept to occasion and circumstance—Consequent fanaticism—Results.

THE Prophet of Mecca was admirably qualified to propagate a religion by artifice and force, and to render it the instrument of policy and of ambition. He possessed, in the highest degree, all the vices of a conqueror, and all the energy and artifice required by an impostor. Bold and decisive, or wily and circumspect, as occasion required, he embraced opportunity with the promptitude which might turn it to the best account; or waited for it with the prudence, which wisely preferred delay that was safe, to precipitation that might be dangerous. Though he deliberated, he never wavered; and, whether he advanced, or retrograded, or paused, he equally promoted the accomplishment of his schemes. His

very fears were instrumental to his purpose ; but, if they looked forward to results with a prophetic vision, they only taught him to be more wary and more vigilant, without being less determined or less bold. Every thing was converted by his courage or his sagacity, into the means of immediate or ultimate success. He wielded the powers of heaven and earth with equal address. The ministry of Gabriel, the hope of celestial favour, the terror of divine wrath, the contingencies of time and chance, the fanaticism, the madness, and the credulity of the people, were rendered alike subservient to his will. With the most unbounded pretensions to universal charity, and to holiness and truth, he could slay without remorse, and utter the most pernicious falsehoods without hesitation. As a conqueror he was what, perhaps, all conquerors have been, cruel, unjust, reckless of human blood, and careless of the cost which produced the advantages of victory. As a legislator, he was sagacious, artful, and subtle ; skilful to adapt his code to times and circumstances, to tempers and wills ; local, partial, and circumscribed in his laws ; a flatterer, for his own interests, of the vices and prejudices of his countrymen ; and a promoter of public order and welfare, in subserviency only to that dominant selfishness which constituted the sole motive and rule of his life.

Like the founders of the Greek and Hindu mythology, this singular man also pretended to celestial inspiration. Feeble would have been his own strength, if he had not clothed himself with divine authority ; and ineffectual would have been his precepts, if he had not deduced them from the infallibility of heaven. He was too wise in his generation not to secure that obedience by the assumption of superhuman wisdom,

which would have been denied to the weakness of human command. He, therefore, at once, proclaimed himself the missionary of the Almighty, who was to communicate to man the last and most perfect of the Revelations of God ; and the ignorance, and fraud, and corruption, of the impostor, were veiled by a garb borrowed from heaven.

During the infancy of his design, he proceeded with cautious and deliberate prudence, and was able, in the course of twelve years, to gather around him only a few wavering and doubtful disciples. But nothing could subdue or repress his perseverance. As his influence and power advanced, he became proportionally confident and decisive. His mission was announced with a bolder tone, and to more distant tribes. The visitation of Gabriel, the divine intercourse with which he was honoured, the miraculous transmission of the Koran, the immaculate and celestial perfection of the revelation which he was to announce, were more openly, more pompously, and more presumptuously detailed ; till, at length, the audacity and skill of the impostor accomplished the design, which had been planned by his selfishness and his ambition ; and the altar was raised and perfected by his hand, in the deserts of Arabia, before which, even in his lifetime, so many people were to bow down in faith, and to tender their oblations.

When he shook off his early timidity and reserve, he gradually, but with equal policy, assumed the most opposite character. Diffidence and humility would have been unwise, when the increasing faith of the multitude had surrounded him with obedient and ardent followers. For the language of exhortation, was substituted that of command or menace.

With the sword in one hand, and the Koran in the other, he called down the vengeance of heaven on the obstinacy of the unbeliever, or proclaimed the holy war of persecution against the devoted and contumacious infidel. The manner in which he was heard afforded him a proof of the efficacy of his preaching; and the superstructure, of which the foundations had been laid by fraud, was to be perfected by force.

Inconsistency and contradiction were to him as particles of dust; and they did not for a moment impede his course, though they disgraced his character. He proclaimed, in very lofty terms, the justice, the goodness and the mercy of God; yet that God, so just, so merciful and so good, was to be averted from the Mussulman who "wore silk, the excrement of a worm;" who forgot to turn to a certain point in the heavens at a certain hour of the day; who refused to abandon his social and religious duties, for the useless trials and formalities of the pilgrimage; or who was not prepared to sustain the creed of Islam by the persecution of the infidel. In the same manner, chastity, temperance, charity and humility were, at one moment, announced by the prophet as the most indispensable of virtues; yet, at another, he legalized not only for himself but for his followers, the scandals of libertinism, and the licence of the Harem; and, restricting the mercies of God to the children of the Koran, consigned the rest of men to the tuition of the sword. But these inconsistencies were not undesigned. They may be perpetually traced to the sensuality of his passions, or the selfishness of his policy; and if, when his policy and his passions were silent, he was a moralist and a sage, he became, as they impelled him, a

preceptor of licentiousness, of intolerance, and of persecution.

Among the tribes which he addressed were various sects of various religions ; and Jews, and Christians, and Idolators, divided and subdivided into a diversity of holy factions, were blended in the same mass of discordant population. Of these, the last were sunk in the grossness of the most perverse superstition ; and the Christian and the Jew had corrupted or forgotten the pure doctrines of Moses and of Christ. Did the Prophet of Mecca go forth among a people thus various and erroneous in their creed, to reclaim and to enlighten them ? And was he affectionately and zealously employed in promoting among them a sounder faith, and a more perfect morality ? If so, where are the fruits ? But if, on the contrary, he formed his religion “ to become a point of union
“ or compromise to the divided opinions of the sects
“ around him, and so to embrace the principles
“ common to them all, that each party might discover
“ in it an honourable admission of the fundamental
“ doctrines of its own faith † ;” we may easily determine the motives of the Impostor in these vile and unreluctant concessions ; and we may detect in the lawgiver whose pretended object was the good of mankind, the selfishness of the ambitious and libertine Impostor who knew no good beyond his own.

Every motive that can operate on feeble or carnal minds, was impressed for the same purpose, and with similar success. Fear was awed, and hope kindled, by views of celestial wrath, or assurances of celestial

* The language of Paley (*Evidences of Christianity*, chap. ix. sect. 2), is not more emphatic on this subject, than that of Sale in his preliminary discourse.

recompence. In this world the infidel, if refractory, was to perish by the sword *; in the next, to endure, without end or diminution, whatever hell contains of anguish and horror; and the language in which he was thus menaced, was well calculated to accelerate his submission to the Prophet and the law. But the faithful exulted in a different allotment. They were, in this life, to repudiate their wives at will, to replace them with others as appetite or caprice might direct, and to supply the deficiency which was yet thought to exist, by selecting as many concubines as they pleased from the number of their captives. In the next life they were to enjoy a more lavish felicity. They were not told, indeed, of intellectual delights, of progressive wisdom, of advancing holiness, of celestial contemplations, of angelic society. It was their earthly passions which were to be addressed; and the promise of a Paradise unspeakably voluptuous, with its robes of silk, its palaces of gems, its rivers, its shades, its groves, its couches, its delicious wines, its interminable feasts, and its seventy-two virgins, of resplendent beauty and eternal youth, was designed and calculated to intoxicate the imagination, to inflame the desires, and to provoke and perpetuate the zeal, of the followers of Mahomet.

Yet the Prophet did not hold out an equal allotment to all the faithful. His business was war and conquest, and war and conquest required soldiers and heroes. He was, therefore, to excite a spirit

* "Strike off their heads, strike off all the ends of their fingers, kill the idolators wherever you shall find them." *Koran*, ch. viii. vol. 2. p. 140, and vol. ii. ch. ix. p. 149. The vengeance of the menace was often executed to the letter.

of intrepid enthusiasm in his followers, and to gather round his standard a race zealous for conflict with the infidel, and prepared, in the cause of his religion, to conquer or die. For those, then, who glowed with the zeal of the warrior or the fanatic, he reserved the more resplendent glories, and the more seductive delights, of his carnal paradise. The bribe was not offered without effect. A race of warriors speedily surrounded the master Arab; and an army, fired with the frenzy of proselytism or of extermination, was created and sustained. The language and promises which kindled this holy ferocity, let the impostor himself more particularly utter. "God
" hath, indeed, promised Paradise to every believer;
" but he prefers those who fight for the faith, before
" those who sit still, by adding unto them a great
" reward. Do ye believe the giving drink to the pilgrims, the visiting of the holy temple, to be actions
" as meritorious as those performed by him who
" fighteth for the religion of God? They shall not
" be held equal by God; but they who employ their
" person in defence of the faith, shall be in the
" highest degree of honour with God, and the Lord
" shall send them tidings of mercy and good will,
" and gardens wherein they shall enjoy everlasting
" pleasures*. For the sword is the key of heaven and
" hell; and a drop of blood shed in the cause of God,
" a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two
" months spent in fasting and prayer. Whosoever
" falls in battle, his sins are forgiven in the day of
" judgment; his wounds shall be resplendent as
" vermillion, and odoriferous as musk, and the loss

* Sale's Koran, ch. iv. p. 73. Ib. ch. ix. p. 151.

The legacy was employed with sufficient effect. The voice of Ali, and of the succeeding caliphs, was heard only to call the faithful to battle. "Idolaters, conversion, or death! Christians, and Jewish dogs, the Koran, the tribute, or the sword! Believers, victory, and spoil, and the joys of Paradise!" Such was the perpetual war-cry of the fanatics. Disdaining the slow and less effectual arts of persuasion, they prosecuted their long career of violence with the most orthodox uniformity of vigour and courage; and the bloody harvest of the seeds which had been sown by the apostle, was reaped and gathered by a race breathing the spirit of exterminating war, and exhibiting to the world a frightful example of the most sanguinary, ungovernable, and destructive fanaticism.

The conclusion is obvious. The founder of the Koran was worthy of the religion he propagated, his followers of the founder, and the religion of both. The impostor was a hardy criminal in a robe of triumph. The faith was an artful falsehood, recommended by the imputed authority of heaven. The successors were enthusiasts, armed to establish their throne and their creed in the blood of mankind. The whole tale impresses us with aversion and disgust. We discover, while we read, the effects produced by an unbridled fanaticism; and we deplore the miseries which that fanaticism has brought upon the world.

SECT. IV.

The founder of the Gospel—His early circumstances—Disadvantages under which he commenced his ministry—The history of his life unostentatious, simple, and credible—His conduct holy and disinterested—Sublimity of his motives—Perfection of his example—The attestations of evangelists, apostles, disciples, friends, and enemies, to the excellence of his life—His character as a public teacher—Mode and temper of his address—His humility, dignity, authority—His allegories and parables—His undeviating impartiality, and his uncompromising, though meek and lowly, spirit—His prudential wisdom—His tempered zeal—His gentle, charitable, and patient teaching—Comparative inferiority of all the other legislators of man—The evidence afforded, by this view of a divine character and a divine mission—His disciples.

THE history of Christ, as it is recorded in the Gospel, has derived no embellishment from human eloquence. It is a narrative, throughout, of which the details are too artless to excite suspicion, or to imply contrivance. The virtues which it exhibits are neither blazoned with skill, nor amplified by exaggeration. There is nothing of the taste of Xenophon, or the pomp of Plato, to seduce or deceive. Every where the phrase is unaffected and simple. And writers have demonstrated, in all they have written, a guileless and unpretending piety, which might justly defend them from every imputation of artifice or of fraud.

When the philosopher of Geneva exercised the keenness of his scrutiny on this subject, the scepticism of the ambiguous Christian was repressed; and he who had ventured to reject the testimony of miracles and of prophecy, openly and earnestly embraced the evidence which is to be deduced from the style and

manner of the evangelical narration. " Shall we " assert," says he, " that the history of the Gospel " was invented at pleasure? But it is not so that " men invent. It would be more inconceivable that " a number of men should forge this book in concert, than that one man should furnish the subject " of it. Jewish authors would never have adopted " such a manner, nor devised such a morality ; and " the Gospel has marks of truth so great, so striking, " and so perfectly inimitable, that its inventors would " be still more astonishing than the astonishing character which it records*."

I advert, then, dispassionately and humbly, to that august character, as it is delineated in the pages of the Gospel ; and I inquire how far the virtues which he practised, and the wisdom with which he taught, may be admitted to corroborate or to confirm the claims of Christ to the homage and acceptance of mankind !

I. Selfishness and fraud derive their motives from the world, and, as they are the last and worst defects in the founder of a religion, because they discredit the doctrines which he proclaims, and avert the faith which he requires ; sincerity and disinterestedness are among the most essential virtues, because they afford a primary evidence of the truth of his pretensions. We ask, then, what appear to have been the motives of Christ? Did he display any anxiety for worldly acquisitions? Do we behold him occupied with sordid schemes for sordid purposes? Has he, in any instance, descended to the vile competitions of temporal interests, or been governed by the fallacious views of temporal glory? Did he, during his

* Rousseau, *Emile*, vol. iii. p. 179. Amst. 1762.

whole ministry, sacrifice the slightest duty for the indulgence of any narrow or corrupt passion? Or compromise a truth to conciliate the regard, or avert the hostility, of the great? Or become a flatterer of the people for popular favour or support? Nothing of all this. On the contrary, he may be said to have lived, not for himself, but for mankind; not for the pleasures, the dignities, or the pomps, but for the welfare, of the world. He prosecuted the great object of his ministry, with more than mortal perseverance, in the midst of suffering and of sorrow. Instead of being animated in his labours by the hope of personal advantage, he proceeded with undeviating integrity in his course, under the avowed persuasion that he was, thereby, only to excite the malignity of the wicked, and the hostility of the great. How did he resist the bigoted prejudices, and corrupt passions of men! With what calm but commanding dignity did he rebuke the avarice of the rich, and the vain-glory of the proud! With what authority did he drive the money-changers from the temple, and correct the idle traditions of the priesthood! Even when he saw before him, the hall of Pilate, the guard, the judgment seat, the scene of Calvary, and the agonies of the cross, he maintained the same unvarying and disinterested righteousness. He might still, it is probable, have averted the dangers which menaced him, by a skilful accommodation of his doctrines to the temper of the sanhedrim. But every thing seemed to him indifferent, save the office he had to sustain, and the good he had to accomplish; and, at length, with the same heroic constancy, and the same invincible devotion to truth and virtue, which he had hitherto displayed, he afforded, by a painful and lingering death, a final testimony of his superiority to all selfish and

sordid considerations, and of his unbounded zeal for the happiness of mankind.

II. But sincerity and disinterestedness are not the sole virtues required in the lawgiver; "and it is as certain that the precepts which are not enforced by a correspondent practice in the teacher, will avail but little with the generality of mankind, as it is that we know of no public teacher, of a mere human character, whose practice has not fallen far below the rules which he prescribed to others and to himself*." Whereas the life of Christ is his own Gospel in action; and the most sublime and perfect precepts have been verified by the most perfect and sublime example. "We find no fault in him!" He who was arraigned as worthy of death or of bonds, was thus pronounced blameless by the very judge whose pusillanimity consigned him to the malice of his persecutors. His whole conduct, the whole temper of his soul, the whole tenor of his intercourse among men, sufficiently justified the decision; and, if we confine ourselves solely to this negative excellence, this faultless innocence of character so beautifully and uniformly sustained, we admit in him a perfection to which the best and noblest of human beings can be scarcely said to have even approached. He stood not, however, unrivalled in this respect alone. How perfect was his love of God! How unreserved was the obedience with which he yielded himself to the service, or resigned himself to the will, of his heavenly Father! How pure and ardent was the piety which was so often exercised in his secret devotions; which breathed and glowed in the habitual thanksgivings

* I borrow willingly from the excellent Porteus, *Serm.* vol. ii. sermon xi.

of his heart ; which poured forth the short but solemn supplication over the body of Lazarus ; and which, on the last evening of his life, and in the midst of the agony of the garden, ascended in ardent but humble supplication to God ! Trying and peculiar was the situation in which he was placed, and pure and magnanimous were the virtues which it called forth. As circumstances required, he displayed the fearless fortitude of unswerving integrity, or the patient meekness of uncomplaining humility ; he stood forth to unmask the hypocrisy of pharisaical pretence, and to resist the fallacies of the doctors of the law, or he attracted reverence and affection, by the suavity yet dignity of his deportment, by the mild and persuasive gentleness with which he admonished the errors and prejudices of his disciples, and by a temper, under the severest provocations, equally composed and meek. The perfect goodness which the philosophers of Greece had endeavoured to describe, but of which they could produce no example among the sons of men, or among their gods, was in him realized and visible in all the majesty and loveliness of its attributes. With what unwearied benevolence did he extend his kindness, his compassion, and his solicitude, to all around him ! With what merciful consideration did he accept the widow's mite ! With what charity did he repress the forward zeal of his disciples in the Samaritan village ! With what patient gentleness did he rebuke the hand that smote him in the palace of the high priest ! He did not disdain to indulge in the sympathies of commiseration, nor in the kindness of affection. He wept when he beheld the tears of the sister of Lazarus ; his pity descended in balm on the heart of the woman of Nain ; he took John to his bosom ; he condescended

to instruct the poor Samaritan at the well; he rebuked the denial of Peter with a look of compassion; and the tenderness or the mercy which he thus felt for individuals, was accompanied by the higher charities which extend themselves from individuals to communities, and from communities to mankind. The exclusive zeal of sects and parties could not reach him. The lost sheep of the house of Israel were addressed by the voice of the good shepherd. The Gentile, wandering in the darkness of idolatry, was invited to the wells of living water. To Samaria, rejected and insulted though she was by the orthodox Jew, were pointed out the paths of truth and of salvation. Ignorance was enlightened with a beam from heaven. Hunger was fed with the bread of life. Sin was invited, with affectionate and ceaseless solicitude, to return from the error of its ways, and partake of the blessings of pardon and acceptance.

This is not all. Of the precepts of Christ some were peculiarly painful and difficult in performance; and these he seems to have been especially anxious to elucidate by his life. He came not to inculcate the nominal virtues of what might be termed the heroic character, the vigor, the firmness, the resolution, the honour, inflexible in purpose, violent in resentment, keen in sensibility, and implacable to wrong. He came rather to substitute for these qualities, the tame, and abject, and poor spirited disposition of the heart, as it has been termed, which, always ready to concede and to forgive, is less prompt to act than willing to suffer, is silent and gentle under the aggressions of rudeness and insult, is solicitous of reconciliation where a different temper would demand atonement, and is anxious, not to contend with, but to indulge, as far as principle may

permit, the prejudices, caprices, and intractability, to which it may be opposed. Now this passive fortitude, this yielding meekness, this generous and magnanimous, though so often despised, placability, this lowly, and humble, and self-sacrificing spirit, so perpetually proscribed by the pride or the folly of the world, particularly distinguished the character, and the conduct, of Christ. Did he preach the contempt of the pomps and vanities of life? He himself resigned them all. Did he recommend patience and submission to the will of God? He endured, with uncomplaining meekness, innumerable sorrows. Did he enforce the duties of humility and self-abasement? He washed his disciples' feet. Did his friends hesitate in their belief, and forsake him in his trials? He pitied, but did not condemn them. Did he command his followers to forgive that they might be forgiven, to pray for those who despitefully used them, and to return their enemies good for evil? He repaid the malice of his persecutors with the most charitable and anxious zeal for their salvation; he would have gathered Jerusalem, the slayer of the prophets, and soon to become the slayer of himself, as a hen that gathereth her brood under her wings, but she would not; and, when he was about to expire under the cruel agonies of a lingering and shameful death, and beheld around him the unhappy multitude who had conducted him to the cross, and reviled and mocked him with unfeeling barbarity, even in his last moments; he still preserved the same celestial benevolence which he had so ceaselessly displayed during the whole period of his ministry, and the voice of more than human mercy and compassion was heard, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Every age, from the death of this "perfect man," has heard the sarcasms, and witnessed the malignity of the scoffer and the infidel. But which of his enemies has ever convicted him of crime? Which has ventured to arraign his charity, his justice, his love of truth, his unaffected piety, his "temperance in all things," his meek submission to the Divine will? Which has dared to deny the purity, the gentleness, and the sweetness of his manners; the mildness with which he rebuked the errors and prejudices of men; the fortitude and consistency with which he accomplished the duties, and endured the sufferings, of his celestial mission? All the ingenuity of the pretended sage, all the raillery of the mocker, all the eloquence and misrepresentation of infidel schools, have been employed to ridicule and malign his character. What has been the result? Not an imputation, not a suspicion, of any offence, has rested upon him. The arrows of malignity have fallen harmless to the earth; and he still continues to be regarded as, beyond all comparison, the best, the wisest, and the greatest of men*.

If Christ had exhibited a different character, his frailties would have been speedily blazoned to the world with malignant industry, and the accusation of his enemies would have been loud and triumphant—He announced the precept, it would have been said, but he has contradicted it by his life. He has proclaimed doctrines difficult to be fulfilled, but he has left the practice to others. He may have spoken like a sage, but he has acted like an impostor. He

* "Innumerable lies and calumnies have been forged against him; but there was not one of his enemies who uttered an imputation against the purity, the chastity, and the innocence of his life." Origin, *Epist. Contr. Cels.* lib. iii. N. 36.

has pretended to deduce his maxims from heaven, but his conduct opposes to his pretensions the irresistible evidence of earthly infirmity.

The conclusion would not be unjust, nor the rejection which would follow. But let us reverse the picture. That every thing should be sacrificed for truth and virtue ; that all the evil desires, and all the evil tendencies of the heart, should be chastised and purified ; that the vices and vanities of the world should be resisted and renounced ; that the calamities of life should be sustained with uncomplaining humility and patience—Such was his doctrine. Did he, then, illustrate precepts like these, by correspondent action ? Was his conduct, in every respect, conformable to the most pure, the most sublime, and the most painful of his rules ? Do we, in a word, behold the Gospel, in all the perfection of the piety and morality which it breathes, visible in his life ? Here, at least, there is irrefutable evidence of his sincerity ; and the approbation of the doctrines which were thus exemplified, is accompanied by respect and veneration for Him who afforded the example.

It is not Evangelists, it is not Apostles, it is not friends, it is not the wise, and good, and candid, only, who have admitted the pre-eminent excellence of this example. Persons the most eager to depreciate the character and to dispute the mission of Christ, have borne testimony to his pure and transcendent virtues. The officers who were commissioned to apprehend him, returned to their masters only to acknowledge “ that never man spake like this man.” His noble appeal to the rectitude of his life, “ Which of you accuse me of any sin ? ” was followed, not by a conviction of guilt, but by an absurd and impious calumny, “ Say we not well that thou hast

a devil?" Judas himself, casting away the thirty pieces of silver, exclaimed, in an agony of remorse, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." The Jewish Rulers, after an inquiry stimulated by prejudice and zeal, could bring no evidence against him but such as was evidently fraudulent and false. Herod, crafty and malignant though he was, could only conclude that "he was John the Baptist, who had risen from the dead," and whose innocence was attested by "mighty works." The bigoted Jews, far from charging him with any impurity of life, rested their complaint solely on the incredible imputation that "he cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." Even Pilate, the pusillanimous and guilty judge, washed his hands and declared, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person." And the Roman Centurion, an unconverted Idolator, astonished at his deportment under the afflictions of the cross, glorified God, and exclaimed with a generous and noble enthusiasm, "Truly this was a righteous man! Truly this was the Son of God!*"

In subsequent times the reluctant testimony of pretended friends and avowed enemies, was extorted by the same virtues which have been so admitted, and extolled. I advert to two instances.

In Christ, says one author, who has perverted the doctrines of the Gospel for a theory, "we have an example of a quiet and peaceable spirit, of a becoming modesty and sobriety; just and honest; upright and sincere; above all of a most gracious

* John vii. 46; John viii. 46, 48; Luke xx. 39; Matt. xxvii. 4; Matt. xiv. 2; Matt. xii. 24; John xi. 47; Luke xxiii. 4, 14; John xix. 6; Matt. xxvii. 24; Luke xxiii. 47.

“ and benevolent temper and behaviour. He did
“ no wrong, no injury to any man ; in whose mouth
“ was no guile ; who went about doing good by
“ his preaching and ministry. His life was a beau-
“ tiful picture of human nature, when in its native
“ purity and simplicity ; and showed, at once, what
“ excellent creatures men would be, under the in-
“ fluence and power of that Gospel which he preached
“ unto them *.”

The eloquence of Rousseau, exerted so often, and with such insidious artifice, to undermine the fabric of the Gospel, has expatiated, with greater pomp and beauty of phrase, on the same subject. “ I confess,” says he, “ that the majesty of the Scrip-
“ tures astonishes me, that the sanctity of the Gospel
“ speaks to the heart. Is it possible that the book,
“ at once so sublime and simple, should be the work
“ of men ? Is it possible that he, whose history
“ it records, should have been a mere man ? What
“ sweetness, what purity in his manner ! What
“ affecting grace in his instruction ! What profound
“ wisdom in his discourses ! What presence of
“ mind, what delicacy, what justness, in his replies !
“ What empire over his passions ! Where is the
“ man, where is the philosopher, who knows how
“ to act, to suffer, and to die, without weakness,
“ and without ostentation ! When Plato paints his
“ imaginary just man, covered with all the ignominy
“ of guilt, and meriting all the honours of virtue, he
“ paints Jesus Christ in every stroke of his pencil, and
“ the resemblance is such that all the Fathers have
“ perceived, and that it is not possible to mistake, it.
“ Greece abounded with virtuous men, before So-

* Chubb's True Gospel of Christ, sect. viii. 55, 56.

“crates defined virtue. But where could Jesus have found among his countrymen that elevated and pure morality, of which he alone furnished both the precept and the example? The most lofty wisdom was heard from the bosom of the most furious fanaticism; and the simplicity of the most heroic virtues honoured the vilest of the people. Yes! the life and death of Jesus Christ are those of a God*.”

II. From this view of the various virtues which distinguished the life of Christ, we proceed to consider his character as a public teacher.

In the assumption of this character there was something singularly wonderful and sublime. He was without education, influence, authority, or name. Yet he was to go forth, to correct the vices and resist the traditions of his countrymen; to denounce the exclusive spirit, and narrow bigotry of the disciples of the Mosaic law; to oppose himself to the priests and rulers of the people; and to proclaim a system of piety and of morals, which was not only to transcend all the most perfect codes of Pagan ethics, but all the preceding revelations which had been made by God. A purpose, so grand and so complicated, might seem to surpass the power of human wisdom in its noblest capacity, and human authority in its most exalted station. How, then, was such a pur-

* *Emile*, vol. iii. 179. Amster. 1762. Rousseau has frequently borne similar testimony to the virtues of Christ. I shall be easily forgiven for quoting the following passages:—“*Nous reconnaissons l'autorité de Jesus Christ, parce que notre intelligence acquiesce a ses preceptes, et nous en decouvre la sublimite.—Ainsi, reconnoissant dans l'evangile l'autorité divine, nous croyons Jesus Christ revêtu de cette autorité; nous reconnaissons une vertu plus que humaine dans sa conduite, et une sagesse plus que humaine dans ses leçons. Voila ce qui est décide pour nous. Œuvr. Divers. de J. J. Rousseau. tom. ii. p. 32.*”

pose to enter into the mind of the poor and despised inhabitant of an insignificant village? Whence had he derived such high and magnificent ideas? By what aid was he to build up such a mighty structure? And what must have been the grandeur of that spirit, and from whence derived, which, in the very depth of poverty, could conceive and prosecute a design so noble and so lofty in the idea, and likely to be so difficult and dangerous in the execution?

His design was more! In all the religions of ancient times we discover the same predominant character. They were all, without excepting that of the Jews, national in their origin, local in their extent, incorporated with the state, and forming the base, or at least constituting a considerable portion, of the legislative code. The religion of the Gospel, on the contrary, is a universal religion, with nothing exclusive; nothing limited to a period, or a realm; nothing appropriated to one country rather than to another*. Its divine Author, embracing in his boundless charity the whole world, came to destroy the barrier which separated the nations; to instruct all mankind in one common law; to tender to all mankind one common salvation; and to proclaim to him, of every nation, who feareth God, and worketh righteousness, acceptance and peace. We know not how to appreciate the moral and intellectual powers of the mind, which could form, in so low a condition, so vast and unparalleled a design. Heroes

* Toutes les anciennes religions, sans en excepter la Juive, furent nationale dans leur origine, appropriées, incorporées à l'état, et formant la base, ou du moins faisant partie, du système législatif. Le Christianisme, au contraire, est dans son principe une religion universelle, qui n'a rien d'exclusif, rien de local, rien de propre à tel pays plutôt qu'à tel autre. Œuvr. Divers. de J. J. Rousseau. tom. xi. p. 32.

and conquerors, who build up and cast down thrones, and give laws to the nations whom they subdue, may afford subject of encomium to the poet, and be embalmed in the ignorant applause of mankind. But mean and limited are all the projects of men like these, compared with that which was announced, under the most adverse circumstances, by the obscure and unassisted Founder of the Gospel! And when we recollect that the world which he came to enlighten and to save, was a world devoted to the most abject superstition, and, universally, and, it might be thought, irreclaimably, abandoned to sin, we stand astonished at the novelty, the magnitude, and the sublimity of the conception, and contemplate with yet higher emotion the Person whose spirit, in such a station, was magnanimous and spacious enough to entertain it.

And in the execution of this purpose, what condescension without meanness, what firmness without obstinacy, what zeal without enthusiasm, what majesty without pride, what piety without superstition, did he not display! These qualities, too, were exercised in a manner perfectly easy and natural, and as if they required no labour nor effort of mind to produce or to sustain them. The prophets fainted and sunk under the communications which they received from above. But Christ, in the prosecution of his more sublime purpose, was always equally dignified and composed. Nothing disturbed or agitated his heart. He was alike without emotion, save that of charity and love, whether he uttered the most august or the most affecting doctrines, whether he feasted at the marriage of Cana in Gallilee, or endured the contumelies of the hall of Pilate! Tried he was every way. But never was he subdued, never

disconcerted, or embarrassed ; and he proceeded in his course with a calm and untroubled fortitude and wisdom, which easily surmounted every temptation and every difficulty to which he was exposed*.

There is another feature in his character as a public teacher, which demands and deserves our especial notice. The most distinguished of the ancient moralists and philosophers announced their doctrines with a supercilious pedantry which averted, or with a sceptical hesitation which embarrassed, their hearers. Each had his school and his dogmas, and all were zealous, in the pride of sophistry, not so much to instruct their disciples, as to confute their antagonists. But Christ, assuming the office, assumed also, from the beginning, the authority, of a divine teacher. All his precepts were delivered in the name of God. He presented himself to the world clothed with the sanction of heaven ; and he spoke in a tone of superiority and command, which no moralist before him had the courage or the right to adopt. The instances in which he exercised this high authority, are striking and numerous—" Many
" prophets and kings have desired to see those
" things which ye see, and have not seen them,
" and to hear those things which ye hear, and have
" not heard them—Ye call me Master and Lord,
" and ye well say, for so I am—The Son of man
" shall come with the glory of the Father, and shall
" then reward every man according to his works—
" I give my sheep eternal life, and they shall never
" perish, neither be plucked out of my hand—I and

* I borrow these observations from Porteus, and I am unwilling to deprive them of the sanction of his name. Sermons, vol. 2 sermon xiv.

“ my Father are one—Ye have heard that it hath
 “ been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for
 “ a tooth. But I say unto you, that ye resist not
 “ evil—Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou
 “ shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy.
 “ But I say unto you, love your enemy, and do
 “ good to them that hate you—And Jesus seeing
 “ their faith, saith unto the sick of the palsy, Son,
 “ be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee—
 “ When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and
 “ all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon
 “ the throne of his glory, and before him shall be
 “ gathered all nations*.”—In this manner spake the
 Legislator of Christians. Calling himself the in-
 structor of mankind, and the Son of God, he was to
 support, in correspondent words, as well as actions,
 the transcendent dignity of his high character.
 What followed? Was his authority disclaimed? Was
 his assumption impeached?—No!—He was heard
 gladly. His enemies acknowledged that “ never
 man spake like this man.” And it was said of him
 by the people, that “ his word was with power, for
 “ he taught them as one having authority, and not
 “ as the Scribes*.”

Yet, however authoritative was his command, his
 teaching was with the very simplicity of wisdom.
 Nothing of the subtlety of the sophist, or the artifice
 of the orator, was to be found in his public or private
 lessons. For essays in which dogmas were to be
 discussed, and for theories which were to reduce
 moral precepts to a system, he substituted the direct,

* Matt. xiii. 17; John xiii. 13; vi. 35; viii. 12; Matt. xxvi.
 27; John x. 28; Matt. v. 44; xxviii. 18; ix. 2; xxv. 31.

† Matt. vii. 29.

unequivocal, and authoritative annunciation of practical truth. It would have been utterly inconsistent with the character he had assumed, and the circumstances in which he was placed, to occupy his hearers with profound disquisitions and scholastic inquiries. As a messenger from God, he was not to court debate for triumph, but to rest his precepts on their intrinsic excellence, and on his own authority ; and to reject all those aids of human eloquence, and all those arts of learned refinement, to which other legislators have so frequently had recourse. He proceeded, accordingly, in perfect consistency with this principle. Rejecting all disputatious zeal, and oratorical display, he communicated his instructions in brief and emphatic rules, and in clear and forcible maxims ; and his language, simple, explicit, and powerful, while it disclaimed the elegance and pomp affected by human orators, was consonant to the purpose and to the character of a minister of heaven.

His teaching was not to be adapted to a select school of Athenian or Roman auditors. It was to be incidental and extemporaneous, and to have a perpetual reference to times and circumstances. During the short period of his divine office, he was to visit many places, to address various multitudes, to be sometimes obstructed by clamour and insult, and to be frequently interrogated by the ignorance or the wilfulness of his auditory. It was his business, therefore, to accommodate his manner to circumstances as they rose, and to the peculiar temper of his hearers. By tedious, formal, or elaborate dissertation, he would have averted the ignorant, and engendered dissension and dispute among the learned. There was but one efficacious mode left for him to

choose, and he adopted it, that of impressing, whether by precept or parable, such concise lessons of duty, as, by their force and justice, might at once reach and edify the minds of men. Considered in this light, his sermon on the mount will appear peculiarly admirable. There, the precept is at once authoritative, and brief. Nothing is systematic, nothing sophistical, nothing elaborate, every thing clear, simple, explicit, cogent, and just. It is not an oration laboured and embellished to accomplish a momentary triumph. It is the unstudied word of Jesus Christ, on which is deeply and indelibly impressed the character of truth, of wisdom, and of holiness; and never did the most victorious eloquence so perfectly accomplish its design, as the unostentatious, and beautiful, and sublime simplicity of that discourse.

His precepts were not the dictates of a cold, austere, and scholastic wisdom. He frequently condescended to enforce them by analogous actions, and by appeals to casual incidents, and to the objects which surrounded him. He preached the purity and innocence of "little children," when "he took them in his arms and blessed them." At the feet of his disciples he taught humility by action. The barren fig-tree, as he passed it by, afforded him an instructive image of inutility of life. Among the sheep-folds, he presented himself to his disciples as the good shepherd who faithfully guided and protected his flock. Among the vines, he discoursed of the spiritual husbandman and vine-dresser, and drew a parallel between the natural vineyard and his own. If the reaper were in the fields, he reminded his followers of the harvest of true believers, and exhorted them to labour diligently in gathering it in. If the tree were clothed in the blossoms of summer,

he pointed to the signs of his approaching kingdom, and admonished the multitude to prepare for its coming. If the woman were taken in adultery, he deduced from the occasion a sublime and important precept, and rebuked the cruelty of the judgment which had been pronounced on her crime by the evil temper of the multitude. If the Scribes and the Pharisees accused his disciples of transgressing the traditions of the Elders because they washed not their hands when they ate bread, he availed himself of the opportunity to instruct them, that man was defiled not by what goeth into the mouth, but by what cometh out of it. In the same spirit, he replied to the question of the woman of Samaria,—“ Whosoever
 “ shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall
 “ never thirst”—and to his disciples, who prayed him, saying, Master, eat—“ I have meat to eat
 “ that ye know not of, for my meat is to do the
 “ will of my Father which sent me”—And when he was told that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him,—“ Who, said
 “ he, is my mother and my brethren? And he
 “ stretched out his arms towards his disciples, and
 “ said, Behold my mother and my brethren; for
 “ whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is
 “ in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and
 “ mother*.” These instances may be sufficient to remind us of the manner in which it pleased Christ

* Mark x. 13, 14, 15; John iii. 3; Matt. xxi. 29; John viii. 3; Matt. xv. 1, 2, 10, 11, 17, 20; John iv. 12; John iv. 31; Matt. xii. 49, 50. A large and curious collection has been made of instances, in which it is probable that Christ spoke in allusion to objects then before him. Newton on Dan. 148, N. a. Jortin. Discours. 213. Law's Life of Christ. The reader will not be uselessly employed who adverts to these references.

to relieve the formality of precept, and to deduce wholesome truths from familiar occurrences. What other legislators would have disdained or overlooked, was made by him to minister to the edification of the heart. And he stands alone in the simple but effectual wisdom with which he gathered emphatic maxims from common events, and rendered seasons and accidents instrumental to the developement and the diffusion of the most essential principles of piety and of morals.

The precepts of Christ were not by these means only brought home to the bosoms of men. The allegories of the poets of classical antiquity, are, in many instances, of extraordinary elegance and beauty. But they rarely convey a truth, in any sense moral or religious, important to mankind. If they please the few by the taste and fancy which they demonstrate, and by the harmony of the verse in which they are detailed, they afford, and were intended to afford, no useful instruction to the multitude; and, the doctrines, if any, which they were designed to elucidate, are too obscure and mysterious for the detection even of the learned*. Of this censure nothing can be applied to the parables of Christ. They are not the mere effusions of imagination; the sportive or studied creations of poetry, framed only to astonish, or to please. We discover in them, easily and clearly, a choice of subject; a felicity of structure; an aptness, propriety, and force of illustration; a pure, a practical, and comprehensive

* Les allegories et les fables dont les poemes d'Homere sont remplis, et qui ne presentent le plus souvent qu'une ecorce simple, que nous n'avons plus le force de penetrer, nous empêchent de sentir les beautes de ce grand poete, et nous font meme mal juger de son esprit. Dacier, L'Iliade D'Homere. Pref. 5.

wisdom, which merits a higher and better praise. Where has charity been more justly or beautifully displayed than in the character of the good Samaritan? Have the wantonness and levity of youth been ever rebuked with more affecting tenderness than in the story of the Prodigal Son? Can the pride of the world contemplate the ostentatious Pharisee without being abased? When was lowliness of spirit so admirably portrayed as in the self-humiliated and self-condemning Publican? Can we follow the husbandman without interest and without edification, while he scatters his seed, some to perish in stony places, and by the way-side, and some, in a good soil, to produce an hundred fold? Is the story of the merciless servant, with the awful declaration to which it led *, to impress the heart with no motive of sympathy and of mercy? Can we behold, without a salutary impression, the wise merchantman, "who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it?" Can we hear with indifference the awful denunciation pronounced at the wedding of the king's son, "Friend, how camest thou in hither without having a wedding garment?"—In these tales, assuredly, there is great pathos and sublimity. They are fables, but they embellish precept and enforce it. They would do honour to the first of poets, but they are worthy of the first of moralists; and they have this peculiar and characteristic merit, that they proceed, at once, and effectually, to their object, and that their object is to recommend to the

* "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Matt. xviii. 35.

Christian of every age, some important truth, and some essential virtue.

And these parables, so forcible, so various, and so pertinent, were they artfully framed in the secrecy of solitude for public application? Were they the work of long and laborious effort, to be employed, as circumstances might permit, for the purpose of impressing the multitude with an high idea of the wisdom of their author? On the contrary, they were all, or most of them, delivered on occasions which did not admit of any premeditation. They flowed, naturally and easily, from some unexpected incident, some doubt or question of a disciple, some discourse which required to be elucidated, or some obstinacy and infidelity which it was necessary to admonish or reform; and, when we consider them in this view, and in the lessons of humility, forgiveness, charity, temperance, and devotion, which they so beautifully and pathetically enforce, they will be thought to reflect peculiar lustre on the character of Christ as a moralist, and to demonstrate his pre-eminent excellence as a public teacher.

If, indeed, we had nothing left of the Gospel but these significant parables, we might find in them a summary of the most important duties, and the most indispensable obligations. Affecting or sublime, as occasion required, they relate to subjects of the highest importance to the great principles of human conduct, to the nature and progress of the Christian religion, to the moral government of the world, to the unalterable distinctions between vice and virtue, to the awful scenes of eternal life, to the divine influence of the Holy Spirit, to the great work of redemption by Christ, and to the distribution of rewards and punishments in a future state; and they thus instruct

the disciple of the Gospel, not with the rigour of preceptive authority, nor the cold formality of scholastic address, but with a dignity and fervor of sentiment, and an unaffected simplicity of language, which forcibly speak to our best feelings and affections, and leave a deep, and lasting, and holy impression on the soul.

The great Christian legislator was thus to teach the people by incident, by allusion, and by parable. His character however as a divine instructor was to be brightened and perfected by other qualities and powers equally necessary to the success of his mission ; and to some of those he beautifully adverts in the very opening of his august ministry. “ The
“ spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath
“ anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, he
“ hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach
“ deliverance to the captives, and recovering of
“ sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that
“ are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of
“ the Lord *.”

This spirit, indeed, was upon him, and was his guide from the first moment to the last of his holy mission. His instructions were to be the property of all mankind ; and the world, for the first time, was to behold, in the Gospel which he preached, a religion utterly free from the taint of fanaticism and of exclusion. But, though the same tender of salvation was made alike to the rich and to the poor, he delighted to address himself in a more especial manner to the humble, the indigent, and the lowly of heart. With such as these he mingled in the most gracious and condescending manner. While they experienced

* Luke iv. 18, 19.

from him all the mildness and tenderness of a friend, they received from his lips the noblest precepts, and the most consolatory doctrines, expressed in language equally plain, intelligible, and clear; and it was said of him that "he broke not the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax *," with a just and especial reference to the compassion which he extended to the ignorance, the poverty, and the sufferings, of the multitude.

Yet he was, in no instance, partial in his exhortations and rebukes. Vice, in every station, was reproved and condemned with equal justice. He tolerated nothing in the poor which he refused to permit in the wealthy and the great; and the wealthy and the great were to be governed by the same law which was to guide the poor. If he associated with publicans and sinners, it was not to encourage them in their errors, but because they were sick and wanted a physician to make them whole. Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, honour those to whom honour is due, respect and obey the authority of your rulers, was his exhortation to the people; at the same time that he condemned, in the most uncompromising language, the plausible hypocrisy, the rapacity and extortion, the zeal for trifles, and the neglect of all the weightier matters of the law, which distinguished and disgraced the Elders, the Scribes, and the Pharisees of the times. This undeviating impartiality, a virtue utterly unknown to all preceding legislators, was not unnoticed by his followers. It proved that he had no private ends to serve, and was to be deterred by no consideration of consequences; and men, im-

* Matt. xii. 20.

pressed with proportional respect and veneration for his person and his doctrines, became more ready to listen, and more disposed to obey.

Yet, if he did not timidly shun danger, he did not foolishly seek it. His wisdom was the wisdom of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove. While he penetrated the minds of men, and chastised the most secret iniquities of the heart, he never once unnecessarily provoked the hostility of his hearers. Often did the Ruler and the Scribe endeavour, with all the skill and learning they possessed, to "entangle him in his talk," to perplex and baffle him with insidious questions, and to involve him in vain and sophistical dispute. But the learned expounders of the law were unable to contend with the simple wisdom of the Man of Nazareth. With exquisite judgment and sagacity, he disengaged himself from the difficulty and danger in which they sought to involve him; and he so interrogated them in his turn, that "they marvelled, and left him; and went their way; for not one amongst them was able to answer him; neither durst any man, from that time forth, ask him any more questions."

By all other religious legislators forms and ceremonies were enjoined as essentially necessary to the attainment of divine favour. But Christ has everywhere rejected the form for the substance. No burdensome rites, no vain observances, and no oppressive austerities, were to be prescribed by his Gospel. He preached no duty which was not connected with the welfare and dignity of man. The stated and formal prayer, the midnight watching, the weary pilgrimage, the vain ablution, the ascetic rigor, the unsocial seclusion, are never even alluded to in his discourses, or alluded to only to be condemned. His two great

positive institutions are of easy observance ; and are admirably calculated, not to burden his religion, but to promote it, and not merely to exercise the faith and piety of his followers, but to strengthen the influence and accelerate the progress of all virtue. Even the oblation of piety, was to give way to the better and more acceptable oblation of mercy* ; and even the injunction of the Sabbath was to interfere with no precept of practical righteousness†. In this spirit Christ proceeded through his whole ministry. The ritual of cumbrous forms or pompous celebrities was done away ; and the place of useless or pernicious institution was well supplied by laws of piety and morality, deduced, with unparalleled wisdom, from the love of God, and the love of man.

But, in thus prosecuting his holy office, the earnestness and zeal of Christ were tempered and chastised. A fanatical legislator accommodates his laws to his passions, and announces them with the wild fervor of unreflecting bigotry. A legislator, ambitious to surround himself with a body of believers, implicit in faith, and prompt in action, endeavours to kindle the ardour of his hearers by vehement and rapturous ejaculations, and by violent urgency of exhortation or of prayer. Christ disdained alike the temper and the intention of men like these. Nothing of that impassioned elation, or that un-governed emotion of spirits, which distinguishes and pervades the character of the enthusiast ; and nothing of that selfishness which governs the conduct of the aspiring impostor, appears to have affected either his language, or his laws. His devotion was calm,

* " I will have sacrifice and not mercy."

† " The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

though deep ; his piety, though elevated, was sober and rational. As he himself was utterly exempt from the raptures and emotions which glow in the bosom of the zealot, he never sought to excite them in his disciples ; and the prayer which he uttered for the guidance of all generations in their addresses to the Deity, breathes only that holy spirit of resignation, dependence, and humility, with which he himself was inspired, and which alone becomes such a Being as man in approaching such a being as God.

In no respect, indeed, did Christ endeavour, by an unworthy condescension to their errors, to conciliate the zeal and the attachment of his followers. The leaders of sects and parties exist by the breath of popularity ; and what they obtain in authority, they must purchase by concession. But the Legislator of the Gospel, though the author of a new institution, was not to seek the applause and favour, but to enlighten the ignorance, and correct the vices, of the multitude. His claim to acceptance was to rest on the sincerity of his preaching, and on the truths which he preached ; and the sincerity was exercised, and the truths were announced, without any reference to popular affection, or public prejudice. “ Not
“ every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall
“ enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that
“ doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”
“ Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord,
“ have we not prophesied in thy name ? and then
“ will I profess unto them, I never knew you, de-
“ part from me ye workers of iniquity*.” It was not the unreasoning zeal with which the disciple

* Matt. vii. 21, 22.

attached himself to his master, but the purity of his obedience and of his faith, that was to work out his salvation ; and the forwardness and the fervor of the multitude, instead of having been courted by the sacrifice of a principle, might have been admonished by the wisdom with which Christ denounced those who, " prophesying in his name," were yet " workers of iniquity."

With the same integrity of principle, and the same dignity of character, he opposed himself to the corrupt temper, and prevailing prejudices, of his countrymen. He had been bred up a Jew ; and he lived among a people peculiarly tenacious of rites and ceremonies, and attached, in the highest degree, to their ritual, their law, and their multiplied traditions. Yet the revelation which he announced was, comparatively at least, plain and simple, and wholly unencumbered by the forms of that ritual, or the vanity of those traditions. The doctors of the law, infected with the glosses and commentaries of their schools, and issuing forth from the sanhedrim to command the assent and the obedience of the people, were fearlessly corrected and refuted by his wisdom. The Pharisees, exact in the payment of tithe, but negligent of justice and of mercy, were, in the same manner, rebuked for a zeal so ostentatious and so misplaced. To the people of Jerusalem, who regarded with aversion the people of Samaria, was emphatically proclaimed the crime of religious hatred, and the necessity of universal charity. The disciple of Moses, who was accustomed to observe the Sabbath with austere and bigoted scrupulosity, was instructed that the Sabbath was subordinate to the good of those for whom it was proclaimed. The whole nation of the Jews cherished the hope of a Messiah, in-

vested with the fulness of temporal dignity and power; but the prejudice was uniformly resisted, and the allusions of the prophets were calmly but strenuously referred to a suffering, despised and humiliated Saviour. The whole body of the sanhedrim indulged their sectarian pride in the vile bigotry of exclusive zeal; and limited to their own petty and corrupt community the favour of the Almighty. In this instance, too, our Lord stood forth to correct and humble the prevailing sin; and the Jew heard probably for the first time, and with proportional astonishment or indignation, that "many should come from the East and from the West, and should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, but that the children of the kingdom should be cast into outer darkness*." The inveterate, and frequently pernicious, errors which he thus denounced, had almost universally corrupted the temper of his countrymen. They might therefore have been indulged with advantage to a worse cause, or a less disinterested legislator. But the duties of a mission like his permitted no flattering and unworthy compromise; and those duties were fulfilled with an earnest but tempered zeal, which proved, at once, his sincerity, his magnanimity, and his wisdom.

In thus accomplishing the great work of his ministry, he disdained to be governed by the accommodating spirit of worldly caution. No crime was flattered, no power was conciliated, no error was indulged, no principle was sacrificed, no compromise was made. His sole instrument of triumph was to be the word of his lips; his sole visible means of

* Matt. viii. 11.

converting the world, were to be the truth and excellence of his doctrine, his fearless devotion to the cause in which he was engaged, and the undeviating piety and purity of his life.

All other legislators have been influenced by the modes of thinking, and the habits and customs of the people whom they addressed; and they have sufficiently proved how well they knew when to command, and when to concede. One framed his institutions for Sparta, another for Athens, another for Rome, another for Mecca, none for man. The lights they kindled contributed but little to diminish the surrounding darkness; and the works of their legislation are monuments only of the miserable selfishness and vanity of human wisdom. Of these defects none reached the character of Christ, for he was not a worshipper of parties or of sects. With a spirit uninfluenced by local, transitory, and partial views, he was to guide all men from vice to virtue, and from falsehood to truth; and it is the distinctive glory of his Gospel, that it was not preached to times and nations, but communicated for the temporal and eternal welfare of all the generations of the earth.

When, therefore, we consider Christ as a public teacher, and advert to the manner and substance of his teaching; when we consider his preference of real virtues, however despised, to pretended virtues, however popular; when we consider the manner of his teaching, so calculated to reach the heart, and so admirably adapted to the situation in which he was placed; when we consider the unequalled felicity with which he illustrated precept by the force and beauty of his allusions and parables; when we consider him in the peculiar temper which he displayed through the whole continuance of his office; earnest,

without enthusiasm ; devout, without vehemence ; pure, without austerity ; superior to the depravities of his age and country, and to the forms and traditions in which he was bred ; free from superstition among the most superstitious of men, and from fear among the most persecuting of sectaries ; without sophistry, in the midst of priests and teachers, remarkable for the frivolous quibbling of their vain expositions ; candid and liberal in his judgment of the rest of mankind, although belonging to a people peculiarly prone to the fanaticism of an exclusive sect, and the pride and intolerance into which it issues ; building up a religion, with no traces of a scheme for his own advantage, no tincture of the narrow minded prejudices which prevailed around him, and no aim, as far as we can discover, but that of universal good ; when we contemplate this man, a Jewish peasant, without learning, without power, without friends, without a home, standing forth in the name and in the character of Messiah ; and, in that name, unintimidated by the bigotry of the superstitious, the menaces of the powerful, the opposition of the learned, and the prophetic anticipation of the hall of judgment, and the agonies of the cross, contending with, and subduing, the prevailing and fanatical prejudices of his countrymen ; announcing laws, not for the moral and religious edification of a people or a sect, but of all mankind ; and, in a word, dispelling the darkness which had been so long gathering over the nations, and bringing life and immortality to light ; we no longer deign to compare him with the best, the wisest, and the most distinguished of men, and we exclaim, with the good and astonished Centurion—" Truly this was the Son of God !"

But, whatever be the impressions which we thus

receive, they will be heightened, perhaps, by the consideration of the temper and wisdom with which he selected his disciples. An artful and ambitious man, aspiring to become the founder of a religion, and to render that religion subservient to his passions or his pride, would be anxious to conciliate the favour, and to strengthen himself by the support, not of the ignorant and the poor, who, in the estimate of the world, might discredit his designs, but of the mighty and the learned, who might accelerate the accomplishment of his purpose, by their authority or their erudition. He would estimate the difficulty of the work which he was about to undertake, and calculate the sum of labour, of influence, and of skill, which it would require; and he would be proportionally anxious to seek for instruments whose powers might be analogous to the magnitude of his design, and, by their splendor or their weight, might attach to his person the essential distinction of popular respect. A mean appearance, an abject poverty, and the support of a few despised and illiterate followers, he would probably consider as little adapted to conciliate the favour and attention of a world which is to be captivated, in general, but by lofty distinctions of birth and rank, and which is governed in its decisions not by the deductions of moral wisdom, but by the respect and reverence of authority. If he were placed among a people who, like the Jews, were instructed to rely with implicit confidence on the decisions of the Elders of a synagogue, and were taught to embrace the prejudices and expectations encouraged by the false glosses of the Commentators of their law, he would adapt himself to the temper and circumstances of the times, and endeavour to make friends and auxiliaries of those who were most

likely to influence the multitude, and govern the fervor of popular zeal. Not so did Christ. Not such were his views of what was profitable and wise. He was to contend with persuasions, strengthened by habit, ratified by authority, confirmed by the voice of magistrates and of priests, and sanctioned by the sentiment of national vanity; and the multitude he was to teach were led away by prepossessions which they had derived from their fathers, and which were as firmly opposed to any innovation in the established religion, as in the constitution of the state. Under these circumstances he selected for his disciples men with no distinction, but that of poverty, of ignorance, and of contempt. What followed?—He himself was regarded as utterly unfit for the office, and totally unworthy of the character, which he had assumed. “Is not this the Carpenter’s son?” And when the station and obscurity of his followers were considered, a new question arose, which seemed to be equally adverse to his cause, “Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this people, who knoweth not the law, are accursed.” In other words, Who are his associates? Does any person of authority listen to him? Are the pretensions of Christ admitted or endured by the priests who understand the law, or by the magistrates who enforce it? On the contrary, he is followed only by men held to be accursed. They who would bring discredit on any association by their penury and their ignorance, are the sole supporters of this new sect; and the ignoble and contemptible assertor of these novel doctrines, is attended only by the most obscure and worthless of mankind.

This appeal, and the rejection which it implied,

were sufficiently plausible, and what most men would call just. It flattered the common pride and the vulgar prejudices of the human heart. The many, who are wont to estimate the goodness of a cause by the rank and authority of those who embrace it, were prepared to adopt a decision so conformable to the prejudice by which they were governed ; and they who enjoyed the dazzling distinctions of birth and fortune, were shocked and averted by the character of the persons, who, selected to propagate the doctrines of the Gospel, brought nothing apparently to recommend them to the favour of mankind, but the ignorance, the poverty, and the contempt, which beset and oppress the lowest station of life.

Yet the evidences of the New Covenant were strengthened by that very selection of tent-makers and fishermen which the world decried. If the qualities of the persons chosen by Christ had been better adapted, in a worldly view, to the object to be obtained ; if there had been authority to control, and learning to vindicate, and subtlety and artifice to plan or to deceive, the progress of the Gospel would have been attributed solely to the efficacy of human causes. The effect produced would have seemed proportioned only to the instrumentality employed ; and the aid derived from the capacity and power of man would have diminished or counteracted the persuasion of celestial interposition, and so far enfeebled the proof of the divine origin of the religion. But the result, between which and the human causes employed, no mortal ingenuity can demonstrate any adequate proportion, justifies a very different conclusion. The end accomplished, exceeding the utmost conceivable extent of the known and limited powers of man, will be admitted to involve

a higher and more perfect intervention ; and that intervention we must necessarily trace to the hand of God, as the only adequate cause to which the effect may be ascribed.

Of the foolish things of the world which were thus chosen to confound the wise, and of the weak things which were thus sent forth to confound the mighty*, what was the nature of the mission on which they were employed, and the result of the labours which they endured? “Go, and teach all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost †.” High and holy was the command. Go forth from your father’s threshold, from the seats of your families, from Jerusalem in which ye have been nourished, from Judea the country of your birth, and of your affections—go forth ; commit yourselves to the doubtful charity of strangers ; pursue your way through distant and inhospitable realms ; proclaim the doctrines of a new religion to the idolatry of the heathen ; contend with the corrupt habits, the pernicious customs, the besotted ignorance, the prescriptive prejudices, the interested priests, the rulers in high places, the false gods, of the Gentile ; and preach to and baptize, not a city, a province, or a realm, but all nations, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, of whom, as yet, they have never heard. Such, in part, were the nature and objects of the duty to which the disciples of Christ were called, and called with the voice and authority of a Master. To a vocation so awful and so sublime, little adequate would have been the eloquence of Plato or of Tully, or the wisdom of Socrates, or of Epictetus. The most favoured

* 1 Corinth. i. 27.

† Matt. xxviii. 19.

and distinguished legislators of Greece and Italy, were utterly unable to reform the vices, and correct the superstition, of their fellow-citizens. What was to be expected in a mission which was to concern all mankind, from the efforts of a few weak, illiterate, and despised disciples? How were they to be enabled, if considered as mere men, unassisted by heaven, to conflict with the tenaciousness of the learned, the obstinacy of the bigoted, the zeal of the superstitious, and the ardour of the fanatic? With what arms could they have opposed the darling vices of a corrupt world, and the prescriptive prepossessions of a vile superstition, which were every where to meet and to oppose them, and to subdue, if not subdued? By what means were they to lay the foundations of a universal church, in defiance of the jealousy of the bigoted, the hostility of the learned, and the persecution of the powerful, which were perpetually to obstruct the progress of their work? And may we not infer that the difficulties under which they were to execute the duties of their sublime office, would have speedily suppressed their efforts and their zeal, and averted them from a cause which they were so ill qualified, in faculty and in power, to undertake and to sustain, if they had not been deeply impressed with the celestial authority of the religion they were to preach, and the Master they were to serve?

Under these circumstances they entered upon their mission. What was the result to the preachers themselves? Contempt, persecution, affliction, the glooms of the prison, and, in many instances, the pangs of death. What, ultimately, to their cause? Triumph and glory. In the first instance, those holy men demonstrated their sincerity by their sufferings; in the last, the wisdom which sent them forth by

their success. They were the weak things chosen by Christ to overthrow the mighty ; and the mighty were overthrown. They were the foolish things selected to confound the wise ; and the wise were confounded. The Gospel, which, in the estimate of short-sighted man, might have been thought to be endangered by the apparent feebleness of its friends, or the unrelenting hostility of its foes, gradually emerged from the obscurity which at first surrounded it, and rose, in fulness of splendor, on the nations. It was, therefore, justly said, that the word of God grew mightily and prevailed ; and, thus, a few poor, artless, and ignorant men, scorned by the learned, and persecuted by the powerful, verified the trust reposed in them by their Master, and established a religion such as the corrupted temper of man was most likely to oppose, and such as, in the purity and spirituality of its doctrines, was directly at variance with every creed, save that of the Jews, which had being hitherto embraced by mankind.

Upon the whole, then, we trace in Christ, and in his followers, the virtues which illustrated their pure and holy precepts, the patient and heroic endurance which demonstrated their disinterestedness and their sincerity, and the wisdom and the sancity which never descended to a compromise with the passions and vices of mankind, and seem to have been solicitous only to re-establish the moral order of the world, and restore the dignity of our frail and fallen nature. They would be thought to have been actuated, through the whole of their course, by none of those fears and hopes which govern the conduct of the children of the earth, or of those temporal views which so perpetually distract the wills and the affections of men. Their character is distinguished,

throughout, by a holy and unparalleled uniformity, by the unvarying and unspotted brightness of consistent excellence. We advert with equal astonishment to the purity of their principles and of their lives ; and, circumstanced as they were, we know not from whence, if not from heaven, they derived the knowledge of truths which had been so long hidden from the most applauded sages of the most cultivated ages, or the motives which could nourish and sustain their spirit through the long and voluntary endurance of so many toils and such unmerited sufferings.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

The evidences, according to Rousseau, of an inspired religion—The principle which he lays down, adopted in the preceding work—Retrospect—The internal character of the religions of Greece, of Italy, of India, and of the Koran, and the pretensions of their founders—The defects of both—The Christian dispensation—Not to be rejected because it may involve occasional difficulty, or pretend to issue from miraculous intervention—Its indisputable excellence, as a system of duty, of consolation, and of hope—Worthy of God—Adequate to the religious edification of man—Christ and his disciples—Their utter incompetence, in a human view, to the accomplishment of their object—Their sincerity, their sufferings, and their success, and the inference from all—Objection, from the pretended failure of the religion—Answer—Conclusion.

IF, says the most eloquent and acute of sceptics, any commission for the religious instruction of the world have ever issued from the authority of God, such a commission must include sufficient evidences of its high origin, to entitle it to the respect and acceptance of mankind. Of these, the first, the most important, and the most certain, would be found in the nature of the doctrines communicated; that is, in the purity, utility, and holiness, which might authorize us to trace them to the inspiration of divine goodness and divine intelligence. The second, would be impressed on the character of the persons themselves, who had been chosen by God for the communication of his word; and their justice, their sanctity, and their truth; their superiority to all worldly

passions, and designs; the disinterestedness, the grandeur, and the sublimity of their views; their prudence, their self-devotion, their sagacity, and their wisdom; and their adaptation, in all, to the high and paramount duties of their divine vocation, would testify that they were something more than mere men, and that they were guided and illuminated by lights from heaven*.

In the preceding inquiry, I have estimated, by this criterion, the most distinguished religions which have prevailed in the world. I have inquired by what internal evidences they were sustained, by what virtues of their founders they were exemplified or confirmed, and whether, if the review might permit us to infer the necessity of an inspired religion, it might also justify the persuasion that such a religion has been conferred.

In four of these religions, the boast of human sagacity and wisdom, the admitted guides of numerous nations, the fancied and venerated repositories of divine truth, we have discovered little but frailty and absurdity, inconsistency and error. That which was promulgated to instruct, was only to misdirect and deceive the world. That which pretended to the sanction of the Almighty, was only to demonstrate the ignorance, the perversity, and the corruption of man.

The doctrines of piety, and the precepts of morals, thus announced, were vitiated by almost every defect which could flow from human depravity or folly. Truth was incidental, falsehood and error, the most extravagant and most pernicious, were of perpetual recurrence. Whatever might be the wisdom of the

* Rousseau.

casual maxim, whatever might be the utility and excellence of the contingent rule, they were enfeebled and counteracted by the intermixture of tenets equally mischievous and corrupt ; and every where the claim to divine authority was defeated by the fraud or folly which demonstrated the poverty and the depravity of a human origin.

The religions of Greece, of Italy, and of India, are equal and similar in their corruption. Innumerable gods are proclaimed, singular in crime, and extravagant in folly ; contradictory in their attributes, their tempers and their designs ; discordant and hostile in the debates of their celestial convocations ; perpetually agitated by worse than earthly passions ; and, with the name and honours of divine beings, demonstrating the fallibility and the frailties of the worst and lowest of mankind. Of these celestial powers, some are cruel, some capricious, some libertine, some implacable, some brutal, none uniform or wise in design or will. In the rule which they exercise, the adoration which they claim, and the institutions which they sanction, they are proportionally pernicious or absurd. They afford no grounds to their worshippers to look up to them for consolation and support, amid the struggles and labours of earthly calamity. They might sustain and bless in their caprice, but there is no permanence in their justice, and no certainty in their mercy. Vice was often to obtain from their interposition what was denied to virtue ; and those lords of the universe, the vile creation of a fantastic superstition, or of the fraud and ignorance of legislators and of priests, were to preside over the world, only to convert it into a scene of disorder and misrule, and to indulge the freaks and gambols of a wild, a wanton, and a mischievous omnipotence.

The religions which erected the statue and the altar to these extraordinary deities, were not likely to exercise any salutary influence on the morals and manners of men. Little effect was to be produced by the practical rule, to which was opposed the execrable examples of the gods. The precept, despised and violated by the inhabitants of heaven, could scarcely be respected by the sojourners of the earth; and the celestial vice would encourage and sanction the terrestrial depravity. But men were not to be corrupted solely by the crimes which degraded the objects of their worship. The moral obligation, which was rarely announced and inadequately sanctioned, was perpetually counteracted in its influence, by rites and customs sanctified in the estimate of the people, and equally vile and degrading in their tendency. What of public or private virtue could be expected to issue from the institution of castes, of household slavery, of a sordid and selfish polygamy, of the funeral pile, of human sacrifice, of the religious obscenity of the temples, established in the East; or from the inequality of the sexes, the facility of divorce, the legalized infamy of infanticide, the festivals and orgies of barbarous riot, the hideous devotion of Corinthian revels, which were admitted and encouraged in the West? On these subjects, the mythology of the Greek, the Roman, and the Hindu, wanted nothing to render it perfect in absurdity and mischief; and we are astonished at the corruption and folly of laws, which, given as was announced, for the salutary direction of human conduct, were, in most cases, the production of ignorance or of fraud, and were uniformly and universally injurious to the intellectual, the social, and the moral interests of mankind.

When we inquire into the theory of reward and punishment which the same religions announced, we discover little more than the evidences of a wild and wandering fancy, and of a superstition equally extravagant and vile. The migratory sufferings, protracted through fifteen boboons of trial ; the double doctrine of human souls, which, at one moment, describes them as the rebellious intelligences of heaven, consigned to mortal forms for punishment and probation ; at another, as the celestial emanations of the divine nature, to be finally reabsorbed, after multiplied wanderings, into the parent source from which they flowed ; the possible lapse of those spirits, not merely at every period of their migration, but after their restoration to felicity, and the new series of purgations which was consequently to be endured ; the rites of expiation diversified into so many modes of fantastic and superstitious reverence, and rendered subservient, not to the moral improvement of the votary, but to the profit and influence of the priest ; all these might excite the religious terror, or the fanatical servility of the Hindu, but could scarcely be efficacious for a better purpose. Of the Greek and Roman, the Tartarus and the Elysium were equally monstrous in fable and design. The punishment was often unjust and whimsical ; the felicity unvaried and incomplete. From the scenes of Phlegethon, with their indomitable Furies, and inextinguishable fires, we pass to the regions of the blessed, only to hear the lamentation, or witness the regrets, of the discontented inhabitants. In the Shade, we discover the temper, the habits, and the restlessness, of the man ; but the earthly pleasures of the man are not accorded to the still earthly passions of the Shade. The poet may exult in his

lyre, the warrior prepare his armour and his steeds, and the voluptuary repose in the twilight of the bower, or indulge in the excesses of the feast. But there is nothing intellectual in their enjoyments, nothing spiritual in their pursuits, nothing progressive in their acquirements, nothing satisfying in their felicity. All are wrapt in discontent and gloom ; and all desire to return to the world, and to partake of the mingled and uncertain allotments of life, in preference to the remuneration to be enjoyed in the meadows, the groves, and the society of Elysium.

The founders of the religion of the Hindu and of the Greek, were persons, indeed, revered by the people for whom they legislated, and, as far as we can trace them, of high distinction amongst their countrymen for their tenets and their wisdom. They all drank, as they themselves pretended, and as the multitude believed, at the fountain of inspiration. If the Vedas, and the other scriptures of the Hindu, were too holy and sublime to be the work of man, the poets and priests of Greece attributed also to celestial instruction the religious doctrines which they interwove in their songs, or uttered in their oracles. But, whatever may be their claim, the best and wisest of those by whom the Greek and Hindu mythology was framed and published, were found utterly incompetent to the task which they undertook. The structure which they reared affords no evidence of their holiness, or their wisdom ; and they have left no example to testify the sanctity of their intentions, the purity of their principles, or the practicability of their precepts.

The Koran and its author may merit a different character, but we have not found them more worthy of acceptance. On all the most important subjects

of religion, the tenets of the Prophet were adapted to the gratification of the most depraved and worldly passions. His code, instead of flowing, as he affirmed, from the inspiration of God, indicates more than the usual inconsistency and corruption of human nature. Charity, in the casual maxim, is opposed by the spirit of intolerance and persecution which breathe in the reiterated precept. The attributes of God, and the interpositions of Providence, are wielded by a man whose instrument of conversion is his sword, and who, when he was not occupied in the overthrow of the infidel, was engrossed by the impure pleasures of legalized libertinism. The most contemptible and puerile forms are substituted for essential piety and virtue; and the fast, and the pilgrimage, and the absurd observances of the Caaba, are often preferred to the purity and the holiness which, issuing from a good heart, are rendered visible in a good life. The doctrine of a future state, the most important, perhaps, of all doctrines, in reference to this world and the next, is vitiated by errors equally pernicious and gross; and a paradise of earthly and interminable voluptuousness, and a hell of manifold and incredible horrors, preceded by the tribunal, the trial, and the award of the grave, are portioned out as best suited the views of the favoured Prophet, and was most likely to overawe the reluctant and yet hesitating Arab, to provoke the zeal of the more credulous Mussulman, and to attract to the standard of the Koran, an army of fearless and unconquerable fanatics. If repentance be required as necessary to salvation, there are precepts of expiation which instruct the followers of the Koran to purchase salvation at a cheaper price. If chastity, temperance, purity, and abstinence, be demanded by the voice of

cause there may be tenets and mysteries which we cannot comprehend. The truth of the Gospel depends on its adaptation to the religious necessities of man, and on its leading facts ; and on them alone. There may be, occasionally, reason for question and hesitation, and there may be, and there are, doctrines, which, surpassing the understanding of man, are proposed only to his faith. But no system has ever been formed, or can be formed, sufficiently clear in all its details to preclude controversy, and sufficiently positive and direct in all its proofs to silence inquiry ; and, if what is clear in the Gospel be sufficient, and of the utmost value, and what is ambiguous or obscure be, comparatively, of rare recurrence, and neither necessary to be decided, nor, in any practical view, of great importance ; the incredulous scoffer might recollect that the defects which he imagines he has discovered among so much good, may exist only in the frailty of his own narrow and dim sighted capacity ; and he might learn to be more diffident of his judgment from the language applied by the piety and good sense of the venerable Augustin to the sceptics of his age. “ Illi in vos sæviant, qui nesciunt, cum quo
“ labore verum inveniatur, et quam difficile cavean-
“ tur errores ; qui nesciunt cum quanta difficultate
“ sanetur oculus interioris hominis ; qui nesciunt,
“ quibus suspiriis et gemitibus fiat, ut ex quantula-
“ cunque parte possit intelligi Deus.”

Christianity, then, may be the just object of acceptance, however it may address itself in some of its doctrines rather to the faith than to the understanding of men. If we be able to ascertain the general truth of the religion, we cannot justify our scepticism by the incidental difficulty ; we cannot close our eyes on the predominant light, because there may possibly exist

some spots of partial obscurity; and we should never forget that a revelation, referring, so necessarily and so often, to the economy and objects of an invisible world, to things not only remote but infinite and eternal, to the attributes of a self-existing God, and the inscrutable ways of an Almighty Providence, must be occasionally mysterious and dark, and must occasionally transcend the utmost sagacity of beings who derive all their ideas from senses that are imperfect and fallacious, and experience that is fallible and frail.

Such a revelation, indeed, must involve the miraculous exercise of supreme authority; and the sceptic, denying the miracle, may reject the revelation. But, if the object and the operation be worthy of the miracle, the miracle becomes no longer incredible. From the wisdom and goodness of God, we might reasonably conclude that he would graciously interpose to clear up the religious darkness in which his creatures were involved, and afford the lights which their forlorn condition as moral and responsible beings required. The race which his omnipotence had created, it could not be unsuitable for his omniscience to guide; nor will his perfections be thought to have been more sublimely exercised in calling man into existence, than in rescuing him from the otherwise irretrievable misery and degradation into which he had fallen. There is nothing, therefore, either irrational or presumptuous in the conclusion, that the deficiency of human, may be supplied by the aid of divine, wisdom; and if the necessity and excellence of the object be worthy of the miraculous interposition, the miraculous interposition cannot be rejected either as impossible or as unworthy of God.

Let us now refer to the preceding details, and to

the inference which they seem to justify. Does it appear that the Gospel was admirably adapted to relieve the distressed condition to which mankind had been reduced by the prevalence of a mischievous and degrading superstition ; that it has announced truths of the utmost moment, which the learning and sagacity of the most enlightened nations had been wholly unable to discover ; that it is utterly free from the errors and impurities which have characterised and disgraced every other religion, save that of the Jews ; that it expresses, in the clearest language, all that is required of rule and precept for the guidance, and all that, in practice, would advance the happiness and dignity, of man ; that it supplies motives, the least of which is incomparably more affecting and sublime than the best and noblest of those communicated by any other system of piety and of morals ; that it affords consolations, no where else to be found, for the support of the weary and fainting sufferer of the world ; that, in cheering and elevating, it purifies, the heart ; that it rejects every pretended virtue, however extolled, and embraces every real virtue, however despised, by men ; that the views which it opens to faith and hope, of the nature of God, the economy of Providence, and a future state, unspeakably transcend the brightest and happiest surmises of all preceding ages ; that it has substituted, for the inefficacy of vain rites, and individual expiations, the efficacy of a full and perfect ransom for the sins of the whole world ; that, instead of being disgraced by the corruptions and fallacies which occupied so great a portion of the mythology of the East and of the West, it has sustained a uniformity, a consistency, and a perfection of wisdom, of which the brightest works of human intellect have

not afforded the shadow of an example ; that in no instance does it appear to have been framed for the purposes of worldly interest or ambition, for the gratification of human appetites and passions, or for the conciliation of the unprincipled prejudices of the powerful or the great ; that it is no where chargeable with the compromise of a truth, or of a duty ; that, in all this, however it may surpass, it perfectly harmonises with, the reason of man, and has effected for the welfare of the world, what the world appears to have been utterly incompetent to effect for itself ; and, finally, that, in opposition to the holy intolerance of other schemes of religious instruction, it has graciously, and with unbounded benevolence, opened the temple of mercy, and included, within its ample and protecting sanctuary, all sects, people, and tongues ? If so, the internal evidence of the Gospel seems to be complete ; and, of the wisdom which has been thus communicated for the hope and edification of man, and which thus so far transcends all that the highest wisdom of man, in its happiest efforts, has been able to reach, it may be reasonably admitted that it comes to us with a deep impression of a divine origin and authority, and may justly claim the acceptance of our faith, and the submission of our obedience.

Now these are among the propositions of which, I trust, the truth has been established in the preceding Work. But the Gospel justifies its claim, not merely by the necessity which required it, nor by the genius, and temper, and tendency, so holy and so salutary, by which it is distinguished, and which are so worthy, if we may presume to say so, of the interposition of divine wisdom. It carries along with it other proofs, in the character of its

Founder, and his disciples, equally irrefutable, and to which the religious history of mankind has nothing similar to offer. An inconceivable ignorance of God had overspread the world. The learned and the unlearned, the priest and the votary, the philosophic sect and the ignorant multitude, were equally involved, on all the important topics of religion, in darkness and in error. The precepts of morality were every where corrupted by intermingled falsehood, and the doctrines of piety every where tainted by the infusions of superstition. The worship was vile, the faith idolatrous, the divinity portioned out in a strange and execrable polytheism ; while even the Jew himself was alienated from the Pentateuch by the Talmud, and seduced from the sublime wisdom of Moses and of the Prophets, by the fantastic dreams of commentators and fabulists. At such a period, a Jewish peasant issued from Nazareth. He appeared among men without any recommendation from the wise, or any support from the powerful. He had no friends, except in his own obscure and indigent family. He was to provide for his daily bread by the labour of his hands. The design he was to accomplish was in direct opposition to the interests of synagogues and sanhedrims, and the evil prejudices and passions of mankind ; and, with no apparent hope, except such as might arise from the grandeur and utility of his views, and the sublime intentions with which he was actuated, he had every thing to fear from the hostility and persecution excited by the ignorance, the obstinacy, and the vices, with which he was to contend. Yet he was undismayed, and unrepressed, and undisturbed ; and he proceeded with a magnanimity wholly contemptuous of dangers, and difficulties, and afflictions, and humiliations, which might

have dejected and subdued the most unbending and heroic spirit, till, at length, he produced a mighty and unparalleled revolution in the world, and established a dispensation which had been but obscurely revealed even to the eyes of the Prophet, and which was designed, at once, to involve the best interests of this world, and to embrace the eternal felicity of the next. How? What schools supplied the wisdom, what authority the power, what influence the means? Was this the work of a mere man, a man unversed in human learning, a man unknown to the theatres of rhetoricians and of philosophers, a man despised for the lowness of his birth, the poverty of his circumstances, the abjectness of his condition? A Plato, a Socrates, a Solon, a Lycurgus, instructed in all the wisdom of Greece, pretended only to reform their country, and failed. Here is a man who, in suffering and in sorrow, aspires to become the legislator not of a realm but of mankind, and publishes a religion adapted to the edification of all times and of all nations. The sages of Athens and of Benares, were extolled and revered for giving their imperfect and inadequate codes to the people who respected and supported them. Here is a man, who, unrepelled by public hostility, and the prospect of Calvary and of the Cross, announces the laws of righteousness and truth, with a zeal and wisdom for which he looked for no recompence in this world beyond the instruction and happiness of those whom he came to teach. Where, in the history of mankind, shall we discover a parallel to such a character? And how shall we account, by human means, for the execution of a design so sublime and so peculiar in its conception, and so astonishing and successful in its accomplishment?—Then who were the companions of this

singular personage; who were the labourers whom he placed in his vineyard? Were they learned? Were they affluent, skilful, eloquent, or powerful? Were they men of address, of influence, or of name? Or did they possess a single talent, which, in the estimate of the world, would have been thought essential to their success? On the contrary, they were as poor, despised, and forlorn, as their Master; and of a temper not less unsteady, than it was timid and pusillanimous. Yet these men, even after they had witnessed the agonies of Calvary, asserted, openly, boldly, and fervently, the supernatural character of the sufferer, and of his wisdom; and, supported only by the holiness and energy of their faith, or by the fortitude inspired from above, they voluntarily and cheerfully submitted, in the diffusion of the Gospel, to a life of toil and hardship, of trial and persecution, of suffering and sorrow. For this heroism of self-denial, this magnanimous perseverance in a cause of such ceaseless and certain peril, we shall scarcely be able to account by human motives. But, further; the disciples of Christ, in other circumstances of their conduct, were equally without example or parallel. In the very city in which their Teacher was buried, in a few days after he had been laid in the grave, in the midst of the triumph of his enemies and their own, they fearlessly and with one voice declared the injustice of his death, and the iniquity of his murderers, and asserted that he had demonstrated his divine authority by his resurrection from the grave, and his resurrection by appearing, after he had risen, openly and frequently among themselves. In the same spirit they preached his religion, and founded it on the evidence of the Cross, in the presence of those who had hurried him to Calvary, and

were indisputably disposed to exercise their power and their vengeance in the persecution of his followers. Nor was this a sudden and temporary fervor. Superior to all worldly views, and all selfish considerations, they continued their course with unabated perseverance, and unyielding fortitude ; and, having proclaimed their errand in the midst of the persecutors of their Master, they proceeded abroad, and asserted the divine character of the Gospel and its author, in regions where they had little, from the nature of their mission, to expect, but derision, insult, outrage, and death. In these labours they displayed a holiness, a purity, a zeal, a wisdom, a temperance, which rendered them worthy of the sublime vocation to which they were called, and which, demonstrating the dignity of their motives, and the firmness of their convictions, gradually and effectually subdued the obstinacy and the prejudice of their opponents, and prepared the minds of men, under the most adverse circumstances, for the acceptance of the Gospel. From facts so singular, and yet so true, what conclusion are we to deduce ? Shall we deny the reality of the mission which was so sustained, reject the claims of a religion which was so preached, and resist the testimony of men who were so tried ? Or shall we not rather trace results, of which we have no parallel in the annals of the world, and which seem so utterly to surpass the efficacy of all human means, to the goodness, the wisdom, and the power, of supernatural interposition ?

To suppose, indeed, that what the learning and genius of all preceding times had been so wholly inadequate to accomplish, was yet perfectly effected by the son of an obscure carpenter, and a few timid and illiterate followers ; to suppose that such feeble

and inadequate instruments should be able to produce and establish a religion so opposed to the vices, the passions, and the interests of the world, and of a character so transcendent and sublime ; to suppose that these poor and despised men should produce a revolution more important and extensive than any which has ever resulted from the best directed energies of the powers of this world ; to suppose that, untaught and ignorant as they were, they had excluded from their system of theology, all those tenets of nominal virtue which had been universally admitted into the theories of human philosophy, and selected and adopted those precepts of real virtue which human philosophy had universally rejected or contemned ; to suppose that they had triumphed over “ the power of princes, the intrigues of states, the force of custom, the blindness of zeal, the fury of fanaticism, the influence of priests, the ambition, the pleasures, the prejudices, the vices of men ;” to suppose that all this was undertaken and performed by such agents, without the aid of supernatural assistance, and solely by their own capacity and power ; and to suppose, further, that they “ became impostors for no assignable reason than the propagation of truth ;” deceivers, only to teach singleness of heart and undeviating honesty ; pretenders, merely to decry hypocrisy and pretence ; missionaries of imposture, for no purpose but to expose themselves to contempt, hostility, and persecution ; and martyrs, in the full sense of the word, without a single expectation to sustain and impel them, of advantage or of honour in this world, or of acceptance and happiness in the next ; to suppose all this to have occurred, would surely require a credulity incomparably more easy of belief, than the faith, in its wildest extent, with

which the Christian embraces the truths and mysteries of 'the Gospel.

The sceptic may possibly ask, What have been the fruits of the religion itself; and what is the religion if the fruits have been few?—But the fruits have not been few. Every other religion was made for the world; the Christian religion against it. Every other religion was compatible with the little, miserable, and contemptible interests of this life; the Christian religion is at variance with, and has rebuked them all. Every other religion has been supported by fraud, by policy, by fanaticism, or by the sword; the Christian religion, utterly averting itself from such support, sought and seeks to derive its influence solely from candid inquiry and rational conviction, and the purity, the holiness, and the utility of its tenets. It might, therefore, have been expected, that this religion would be longer retarded in its progress, and more obstructed in its influence. Yet the effects produced by the Gospel, on the moral condition of mankind, were early visible and important. Before the lights which it diffused, many of the worst errors and the worst vices which had been fostered by the ignorance and depravity of the world, vanished away. The impure altar was deserted. The Pagan temple was closed. The indecent ceremony ceased. The fanatic was no longer to appease his gods by human blood. The despotism and capriciousness of divorce, so injurious to public and private manners, was to be exercised no more. The wanton riot, and the lascivious revelry, were to give way to a holy and spiritual devotion; and the Christian was to exhibit, in his practice, a charity, a piety, a resignation, a temperance, a purity, which afforded the best testimony of the excellence of his

faith, and the dignity of his motives, and were admitted and extolled by the heathen himself. In these times, indeed, the Gospel may produce no such evidence of its influence and power. But the cause is easily to be explained. Men no longer feel the same fervor, nor are governed by the same persuasions, nor are elevated by the same views. The creed of the world is permitted to mingle with and to adulterate the creed of their faith, and their hearts are divided between the service of God and the slavery of Mammon. Something, however, still remains to attest the efficacy and the excellence of the religion of Christ. The genius and temper of his dispensation have penetrated into the cabinets of kings, have mitigated the ferocity of war, have softened the condition of the captive, have opposed the persecution of the sword, and have infused into the bosom of civilized life, a milder, more gracious, and more liberal spirit. Wherever they have been permitted to operate, they have disciplined manners, corrected modes, facilitated intercourse, and promoted the advancement of human intellect. All Europe, that is, the most enlightened part of the globe, has derived, from their impulse, an accelerated progress towards moral, civil, and literary improvement. And, if the fetters of the slave be less galling, and the disposition of rule less oppressive, and the authority of laws more happily and temperately exercised, and the spirit of civilization more widely diffused; we may trace the revolution, directly or remotely, to the wise, the generous, and the beneficent principles, which it has been the perpetual tendency of the New Covenant to cherish among all orders and conditions of men.

Of the best religions of the world, what, even at the

period of their most perfect influence, were the result? Did they improve the condition of mankind? Did they promote social or individual benevolence? Did they soften the manners of private, or the intercourse of public life? Did they diffuse or sanction a pure and a generous morality? Did they instruct men in the nature of God, and in the worship which he requires? On the contrary, they corrupted all principle and vitiated all society; and the very tenets which they most anxiously enforced, were, in numerous instances, directly opposed to the welfare and improvement of the world. But of Christianity, and of Christianity alone, it may be said, that it is calculated, with inimitable wisdom, to check the vices, and to correct and discipline the passions of mankind; and that, were it universally adopted and obeyed, it would finally renovate the corrupted nature of man, and renew the image of God in which he was formed, and which his sins have defaced. What is the spirit which it breathes, but the spirit of peace, gentleness, truth, justice, and holiness? What is the natural tendency of such a spirit, but to subdue the competitions, appease the wrath, extinguish the malice, and pacify the hostilities of human life? Did it possess the heart of kings; how would the charities of brotherhood flow from the throne, in kindly and beneficent influence, to the last and lowest of the people! Did the people yield to its guidance; how would they be softened and subdued into a happier obedience to the laws, and a more peaceable submission to the unavoidable evils of their subordinate condition*! Did all em-

* Ce seroient des citoyens infiniment eclairés sur leur devoirs, et qui auroient un tres grand zele pour les remplir: ils sentiroient

the inference which they seem to justify. Does it appear that the Gospel was admirably adapted to relieve the distressed condition to which mankind had been reduced by the prevalence of a mischievous and degrading superstition ; that it has announced truths of the utmost moment, which the learning and sagacity of the most enlightened nations had been wholly unable to discover ; that it is utterly free from the errors and impurities which have characterised and disgraced every other religion, save that of the Jews ; that it expresses, in the clearest language, all that is required of rule and precept for the guidance, and all that, in practice, would advance the happiness and dignity, of man ; that it supplies motives, the least of which is incomparably more affecting and sublime than the best and noblest of those communicated by any other system of piety and of morals ; that it affords consolations, no where else to be found, for the support of the weary and fainting sufferer of the world ; that, in cheering and elevating, it purifies, the heart ; that it rejects every pretended virtue, however extolled, and embraces every real virtue, however despised, by men ; that the views which it opens to faith and hope, of the nature of God, the economy of Providence, and a future state, unspeakably transcend the brightest and happiest surmises of all preceding ages ; that it has substituted, for the inefficacy of vain rites, and individual expiations, the efficacy of a full and perfect ransom for the sins of the whole world ; that, instead of being disgraced by the corruptions and fallacies which occupied so great a portion of the mythology of the East and of the West, it has sustained a uniformity, a consistency, and a perfection of wisdom, of which the brightest works of human intellect have

not afforded the shadow of an example ; that in no instance does it appear to have been framed for the purposes of worldly interest or ambition, for the gratification of human appetites and passions, or for the conciliation of the unprincipled prejudices of the powerful or the great ; that it is no where chargeable with the compromise of a truth, or of a duty ; that, in all this, however it may surpass, it perfectly harmonises with, the reason of man, and has effected for the welfare of the world, what the world appears to have been utterly incompetent to effect for itself ; and, finally, that, in opposition to the holy intolerance of other schemes of religious instruction, it has graciously, and with unbounded benevolence, opened the temple of mercy, and included, within its ample and protecting sanctuary, all sects, people, and tongues ? If so, the internal evidence of the Gospel seems to be complete ; and, of the wisdom which has been thus communicated for the hope and edification of man, and which thus so far transcends all that the highest wisdom of man, in its happiest efforts, has been able to reach, it may be reasonably admitted that it comes to us with a deep impression of a divine origin and authority, and may justly claim the acceptance of our faith, and the submission of our obedience.

Now these are among the propositions of which, I trust, the truth has been established in the preceding Work. But the Gospel justifies its claim, not merely by the necessity which required it, nor by the genius, and temper, and tendency, so holy and so salutary, by which it is distinguished, and which are so worthy, if we may presume to say so, of the interposition of divine wisdom. It carries along with it other proofs, in the character of its

Founder, and his disciples, equally irrefutable, and to which the religious history of mankind has nothing similar to offer. An inconceivable ignorance of God had overspread the world. The learned and the unlearned, the priest and the votary, the philosophic sect and the ignorant multitude, were equally involved, on all the important topics of religion, in darkness and in error. The precepts of morality were every where corrupted by intermingled falsehood, and the doctrines of piety every where tainted by the infusions of superstition. The worship was vile, the faith idolatrous, the divinity portioned out in a strange and execrable polytheism ; while even the Jew himself was alienated from the Pentateuch by the Talmud, and seduced from the sublime wisdom of Moses and of the Prophets, by the fantastic dreams of commentators and fabulists. At such a period, a Jewish peasant issued from Nazareth. He appeared among men without any recommendation from the wise, or any support from the powerful. He had no friends, except in his own obscure and indigent family. He was to provide for his daily bread by the labour of his hands. The design he was to accomplish was in direct opposition to the interests of synagogues and sanhedrims, and the evil prejudices and passions of mankind ; and, with no apparent hope, except such as might arise from the grandeur and utility of his views, and the sublime intentions with which he was actuated, he had every thing to fear from the hostility and persecution excited by the ignorance, the obstinacy, and the vices, with which he was to contend. Yet he was undismayed, and unrepressed, and undisturbed ; and he proceeded with a magnanimity wholly contemptuous of dangers, and difficulties, and afflictions, and humiliations, which might

have dejected and subdued the most unbending and heroic spirit, till, at length, he produced a mighty and unparalleled revolution in the world, and established a dispensation which had been but obscurely revealed even to the eyes of the Prophet, and which was designed, at once, to involve the best interests of this world, and to embrace the eternal felicity of the next. How? What schools supplied the wisdom, what authority the power, what influence the means? Was this the work of a mere man, a man unversed in human learning, a man unknown to the theatres of rhetoricians and of philosophers, a man despised for the lowness of his birth, the poverty of his circumstances, the abjectness of his condition? A Plato, a Socrates, a Solon, a Lycurgus, instructed in all the wisdom of Greece, pretended only to reform their country, and failed. Here is a man who, in suffering and in sorrow, aspires to become the legislator not of a realm but of mankind, and publishes a religion adapted to the edification of all times and of all nations. The sages of Athens and of Benares, were extolled and revered for giving their imperfect and inadequate codes to the people who respected and supported them. Here is a man, who, unrepelled by public hostility, and the prospect of Calvary and of the Cross, announces the laws of righteousness and truth, with a zeal and wisdom for which he looked for no recompence in this world beyond the instruction and happiness of those whom he came to teach. Where, in the history of mankind, shall we discover a parallel to such a character? And how shall we account, by human means, for the execution of a design so sublime and so peculiar in its conception, and so astonishing and successful in its accomplishment?—Then who were the companions of this

singular personage; who were the labourers whom he placed in his vineyard? Were they learned? Were they affluent, skilful, eloquent, or powerful? Were they men of address, of influence, or of name? Or did they possess a single talent, which, in the estimate of the world, would have been thought essential to their success? On the contrary, they were as poor, despised, and forlorn, as their Master; and of a temper not less unsteady, than it was timid and pusillanimous. Yet these men, even after they had witnessed the agonies of Calvary, asserted, openly, boldly, and fervently, the supernatural character of the sufferer, and of his wisdom; and, supported only by the holiness and energy of their faith, or by the fortitude inspired from above, they voluntarily and cheerfully submitted, in the diffusion of the Gospel, to a life of toil and hardship, of trial and persecution, of suffering and sorrow. For this heroism of self-denial, this magnanimous perseverance in a cause of such ceaseless and certain peril, we shall scarcely be able to account by human motives. But, further; the disciples of Christ, in other circumstances of their conduct, were equally without example or parallel. In the very city in which their Teacher was buried, in a few days after he had been laid in the grave, in the midst of the triumph of his enemies and their own, they fearlessly and with one voice declared the injustice of his death, and the iniquity of his murderers, and asserted that he had demonstrated his divine authority by his resurrection from the grave, and his resurrection by appearing, after he had risen, openly and frequently among themselves. In the same spirit they preached his religion, and founded it on the evidence of the Cross, in the presence of those who had hurried him to Calvary, and

were indisputably disposed to exercise their power and their vengeance in the persecution of his followers. Nor was this a sudden and temporary fervor. Superior to all worldly views, and all selfish considerations, they continued their course with unabated perseverance, and unyielding fortitude ; and, having proclaimed their errand in the midst of the persecutors of their Master, they proceeded abroad, and asserted the divine character of the Gospel and its author, in regions where they had little, from the nature of their mission, to expect, but derision, insult, outrage, and death. In these labours they displayed a holiness, a purity, a zeal, a wisdom, a temperance, which rendered them worthy of the sublime vocation to which they were called, and which, demonstrating the dignity of their motives, and the firmness of their convictions, gradually and effectually subdued the obstinacy and the prejudice of their opponents, and prepared the minds of men, under the most adverse circumstances, for the acceptance of the Gospel. From facts so singular, and yet so true, what conclusion are we to deduce ? Shall we deny the reality of the mission which was so sustained, reject the claims of a religion which was so preached, and resist the testimony of men who were so tried ? Or shall we not rather trace results, of which we have no parallel in the annals of the world, and which seem so utterly to surpass the efficacy of all human means, to the goodness, the wisdom, and the power, of supernatural interposition ?

To suppose, indeed, that what the learning and genius of all preceding times had been so wholly inadequate to accomplish, was yet perfectly effected by the son of an obscure carpenter, and a few timid and illiterate followers ; to suppose that such feeble

"Il est vrai," says Mezeray, "qu'on peut dire que Jupiter se monstra beaucoup plus desbordé, que son pere Saturne: car il ne se contenta pas d'épouser Junon, mais de violer encor son autre sœur Ceres, dont il engendra Proserpine. Et autre il eut affaire avec trois de ses propres tantes, a sçavoir avec Themis, donc il engendra les Heures et les Parques; avec Dione, d'on naquit Venus; avec Mnemosyne, dont les Muses prirent l'origine. Encore passa t'il bien plus avant, car il voulut forcer sa mere Rhœa, au rapport d'Arnobius, lib. v. Bref; se changeant en serpent, il viola sa fille Proserpine, dont il engendra le premiere Bacchus, comme décrit Nennius, lib. xv. xvi. et Arnobius, lib. v. Plusieurs auteurs font mention de cette inceste, comme Clem. Alexandr. en son Protreptique—Le Scholiaste de Pindare sur la septieme des Isthmiques—Diod. Sicul. lib. iii.; Arrian, lib. ii.; Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. iii. Mezeray was a man of learning in the theology of Greece, and his *Commentaires sur les Epitres D'Ovide*, is a repertory of the scandalous anecdotes which the Greeks and Romans told and believed of their gods.

NOTE B. p. 27.

THE view which I have taken of the temper and frailties of the gods of Greece may be completed by a passage in Cicero, which I am unwilling to translate. *Exposui fere, says the Epicurean Velleius, speaking of the religion of his country, non philosophorum judicia, sed delirantium somnia. Nec enim multo absurdiora sunt ea, quæ, poetarum vocibus fusa, ipsa suavitate nocuerunt; qui et ita inflammatos, et libidine furentes induxerunt deos; feceruntque ut eorum bella, pugnas, prælia, vulnera videremus, odia præterea, dissidia, discordias, querelas, lamentationes, effusas in omni intemperantia libidines, adulteria, vincula, cum humano genere concubitus, mortalesque ex immortalibus procreatos. Cicero de Nat. Deor. lib. i. § 16.* This is, indeed, the painting of an enemy, but the colouring is just.

NOTE C. p. 30.

IN his conversation with Aristodemus, Socrates describes the attributes of Deity with admirable precision and strength of language. Yet, through this whole dialogue, he speaks of God, and of the gods, with equal frequency; and, in the last sentence he utters, the

term *το θεον* is immediately succeeded by that of *αυτος*, i. e. *θεος*. Xenoph. Memorabl. lib. i. seg. 18. In the same manner he discloses his polytheism, in his discourse with Euthydemus. Memorabl. lib. iv. c. 3. See also, lib. i. c. 4. seg. 11, 12, 13, 14, 19. Plato is not more consistent—Idem et in Timæo dicit, et in Legibus, et mundum deum esse, et cælum, et astra, et terram, et animos, et eos quos majorum institutis accepimus. Cicero, de Nat. Deor. lib. i. c. 12. Cicero adds, that the Father of the Academy admitted—Modo unum, tum autem plures deos. Ibid. Thales, Cicero, Epictetus, Marcus Antoninus, and the whole body of the Stoics, were also decided Polytheists. Diogen. Laert. lib. i. segm. 36. Tuscul. Disput. lib. i. c. 13. De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. c. 3. et lib. ii. c. 4. De Legib. lib. i. c. 7. Enchirid., c. xxxi. Dissertat. lib. i. c. 4. fere ad fin. Marcus Antonin. Meditat. lib. iii. § 9. et lib. iii. § 33. “The philosophers,” says Cudworth, “made the theology of the Pagan look a little aristocratically, by their speaking so much of the gods in general, and without distinction; and attributing the government of the whole to them in common, as if it were managed and carried on by a common council and republic of gods, and as if their Jupiter or supreme god were no more among them than a Speaker of the House of Commons, or the chairman of a committee.” Intellect. Syst. p. 357.

NOTE D. p. 31.

THE opinions of the Philosophers on this subject are adverted to by Seneca. Quantum Deus possit? Materiam sibi ipse formet, an datâ utatur? Utrum Deus quicquid vult, efficiat, an a magno artifice prævè formentur multa, non quia cessat ars, sed quia id in quo exercetur sæpe inobsequens arti est? Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. i. In Proem. See also Aristot. de Cælo. lib. i. c. 10. Plut. de Placit. Philosoph. lib. ii. c. 4. Diogen. Laert. lib. iii. segm. 69, et lib. vii. segm. 134. Stobæus, Eclog. Physic. lib. i. c. 14. p. 29. Edit. Plautin.

NOTE E. p. 33.

HÆC enim quæ dilatantur a nobis, Zeno sic premabat. Quod ratione utitur, id melius est quam id quod ratione non utitur. Nihil autem mundo melius. Ratione, igitur, mundus utitur. Pergit idem et urget angustius. Nihil quod animi, quod rationis est experta, id generare ex se potest animantes, compotesque rationis. Mundus autem generat animantes, compotesque rationis. Animans igitur

est mundus, compotisque rationis. Cicero, de Nat. Deor. lib. ii. § 7, 8, 13, &c.

Cotta, the Academician, ludicrously applies the same mode of argument to prove the musical, and oratorical powers, of the world:

That which knows how to pipe and harangue,
Is better than that which does not.
But the world is the best of things ;
Therefore the world knows how to pipe and harangue.
Cicero, de Nat. Deor. lib. ii.

NOTE F. p. 37.

THE theology of Plato is generally obscure and often unintelligible. *Rerum obscuritas, non verborum, facit ut non intelligitur oratio, qualis est in Timæo Platonis.* Cicero de Finibus. lib. ii. c. 5. See also Academical Quest. lib. ii. § 39.

Nec ipse quoque Plato, says Jean de Serres, fortasse satis recte seipsum intellexerit. In Argument. Timæ. p. 5.

The learning and acuteness of Bayle were often baffled by this ambiguity of language. Il est si obscur, qu'il rebute toutes les esprits, qui ne cherchent que la lumiere. Continuat. de Pens. Divers. § cvi.

Plotinus endeavours, with much zeal, and much appearance of learning, to illuminate the darkness which has excited so much complaint. But the disciple becomes as enigmatical as the master. The master, probably did not understand himself, and the disciple, therefore, could not understand the master. Nothing, says Plotinus, can be predicated of The Good, the Supreme Deity, of the Platonists,—not being, nor essence, nor life, nor yet intellect and intelligence, lest of one you make two gods, the Intelligent and the Good—Ποσις τῆς καὶ ἀγαθῆς. Ennead. lib. viii. c. 7, 8, 9.

Cudworth, who endeavours to discover a Trinity of divine Hypostases in the writings of Plato, seems to coincide, in some degree, with Plotinus. "Plato," says he, "professing, in his tenth book of laws, to oppose the atheists, undertakes to prove the existence of a Deity. Yet he ascends no higher than to the Psyche, or universal mundane soul, as a self-moving principle, and the immediate or proper cause of all that motion which is in the world. But, in other places of his writings, he frequently asserts, above the self-moving Psyche, an immovable and standing Mind, which was properly the Demiurgus, or architectonick framer of the whole world. And, lastly, above this multifiform Intellect, he plainly asserts a yet

higher Hypostasis, one most simple and absolutely perfect Being, which he calls *τὸ ἓν*, in opposition to that multiplicity which speaks something of imperfection in it, and *τὸ ἀγαθόν*, goodness itself, as being above mind and understanding." *Intellect. Syst.* vol. 1. lib. i. c. 4. pp. 406, 407.

"The Good," he adds from Plato, "is the same, in the intelligible world, to intellect, or knowledge and intelligibles, as the sun, that heavenly god, is, in the sensible world, to sight and visibles. For, as the sun is not light, but only the cause of it, nor is that light by which we see, but only a sun-like thing; so neither is the supreme and highest Good knowledge, but the cause of knowledge, nor is Intellect the best and most perfect Being, but only a Boniform thing. This highest Good is not itself properly essence, but above essence, both in respect of dignity and power." *Plat. Polit.* lib. v. *Intellect. Syst.* vol. i. pp. 407, 8.

Plotinus endeavours to describe more fully and clearly what Plato has thus involved in such impenetrable darkness. "The Good," says he, "is the cause of himself, and he is from himself, and himself is for himself. He is the Maker of himself, the Lord over himself. His will and essence are the same thing. Wherefore, since his willing is from himself, his being is from himself also. For, if his volition be from himself, and his own work, and this be the same with his hypostasis or substance, he may, then, be said to have given substance to himself. Wherefore, he is not what happened to be, but what he willed himself to be." *Ennead.* vi. lib. viii p. 748, &c.

NOTE G. p. 41.

THE whole passage in which this Deity is described is worthy of notice. It is not perfectly decorous; but it throws some light on the genius of Oriental theology, and I therefore introduce it.

"Nothing existed in the world before the existence of mind. This universe was encircled by death, eager to devour. He framed mind; and mind felt dread, till he reflected, that, as nothing existed but himself, he had no cause to fear. Then his terror departed from him.

"But he experienced not delight. He wished the existence of another, and he instantly became such as man and woman. He caused, then, his own self to fall in twain, and, thus becoming a husband and wife, all human beings were produced.

"The wife reflected, doubtful. How can he, having produced me from himself, incestuously approach me? I will assume a dis-

guise. She, accordingly, assumed various forms. But she could never deceive him. He perpetually approached her in the same form which she had assumed; and every existing pair were consequently produced, from the nobler animals to the ant and the worm." Translat. of the *Veihad Aranyaca*, the conclusion of the *White Yajush*, a portion of the *Vedas*, by Colebrook. *Asiat. Reg.* v. viii.

The division of the substance of the Supreme Being into male and female, and his incestuous marriage with his daughter, are asserted in several *Puranas*, and in some with little delicacy and reserve of language. *Asiat. Reg.* vol. viii. pp. 439, 440, 441.

NOTE H. p. 48.

THE world, says the *Manava Sastra*, was all darkness, undiscernible, undistinguishable, altogether as in a profound sleep, till the self-existent, invisible God, making it manifest with five elements and other glorious forms, perfectly dispelled the gloom. He, desiring to raise up various creatures by emanations from his own glory, first created the waters, and impressed them with a power of motion. By that power was produced a golden egg, blazing like a thousand suns, in which was born *Brama*, the self-existing, the great parent of all rational beings. But *Brama*, having dwelt in the egg through revolving ages, himself meditating on himself, divided it into equal parts, and from those parts formed the earth and heavens, placing in the midst the subtle æther, the eight points of the world, and the permanent receptacles of the waters."

Other tales of the creation, equally extravagant, are repeated in the *Vedas*. Death, it is said, was not, nor immortality. But *That* breathed, single with *Swadha*, her who was sustained within him. Desire was raised in his mind, and became the original principle, which the wise recognising by the intellect in the heart, distinguish in non-entirety as the bond of entirety. Did the luminous ray of these creative acts expand in the middle, or above, or below? Who knows exactly, and who in this world shall declare, whence and by whom this creation took place? The Gods are subsequent to the production of the world. Then who can tell whence it proceeds? Colebrook on the *Vedas*. *Asiat. Reg.* vol. viii.

NOTE I. p. 53.

THE prophet, having limited his libertinism to a certain number of wives and concubines, subsequently found that he had consented to

a restriction which contracted too much the sphere of his pleasures; and he, accordingly, resolved to enlarge his privilege. The name of God was impiously made subservient to his design. The angelic Gabriel arrived with a new *Sura*; and the carnal adventurer was permitted to indulge, to the utmost, his most insatiable desires. "O prophet, we have allowed unto thee the wives to whom thou hast given thy dower, and also the slaves which thy right hand possesseth of the booty which God hath granted thee, and the daughters of thy uncles, and the daughters of thy aunts, both on thy father's and thy mother's side, who have fled from Mecca; and any other believing woman, if she give herself to the prophet, if the prophet desireth to take her for wife." Kor. ch. xxxiii. Abul-Feda, in *Vit. Mahomm.* p. 147, says, that the prophet had allowed himself but fifteen wives, exclusive of concubines; but it is clear, from the passage here quoted, that he might have taken as many as he pleased. The "any other believing woman" is a sweeping clause.

The perjury of Mahomet found equal facility in obtaining the sanction of heaven. He had solemnly sworn, at the entreaty of one of his wives, that he would no longer cohabit with a slave of the name of Mary. But his eyes soon wandered back to the beauty which he had thus renounced; and the text was instantly conveyed to him from heaven, which allowed the renewal of his pleasures, and "the dissolution of his oath." Kor. ch. lxvi. Sub. luit.

His love for Zeinah, the wife of his adopted son, was equally to be consecrated by the divine approbation. She had long resisted his solicitations, but the celestial command was produced, and she was piously transferred to the chamber of Mahomet.

The pride of the woman afterwards boasted of this divine condescension. "Other marriages, said she, are arranged by relatives and friends. Mine has been the work of heaven." Kor. ch. xxxiii. and Note, by Sale, in loco.

It was not, however, enough to require that the dissolute passions of the impostor should be justified at will by a voice from heaven. The cruelty of spoliation and massacre was also to have its celestial sanction; and, after the militant prophet had overthrown villages and towns, and had degraded whole tribes into slaves, or coolly ordered them forth to indiscriminate slaughter, the annunciation was heard which vindicated the act of blood: "A part of them ye slew, and a part of them ye made captives, and God hath caused you to inherit their lands, their houses, and their wealth." Koran, ch. xxxviii. See also Abul-Feda. p. 79.

NOTE K. p. 71

FORTUNE is perpetually said to control the designs of men and gods:

Nempe dat et quodcumque libet, rapitque,
Irus est subito, quo modo Cræsus erat.

Ovid. de Trist. vii.

Passibus ambiguis fortuna volubilis errat,
Et tantum constans in levitate sua.

lb. lib. ix.

What, says Euripides, is the disposition of the gods? Is the progeny of man really their care? Is it not evident, that, satisfied with their own happiness, they abandon every thing to Fate and Chance? Or must we not rather admit that, whatever be their power and their wisdom, the Universe is governed by the operation of an eternal and invincible necessity, to whose dominion gods and men must equally submit?—Eurip. Hecub. act iii. The conclusion was as common as it was impious. Would it else have become the subject of theatrical declamation?

A splendid temple was erected to Equestrian Fortune at Antium, and the fickle goddess was there consulted and adored. Monuerunt et sortes Antianæ ut a Cassio caveret. Sueton. In Calig. c. 57. Vidimus apud Antium promoveri simulacra fortunæ. Macrobian. lib. i. c. 23. See also Horace, Ode, lib. i. 35. Cicero. De Nat. Deor. lib. iii.

This Divinity was not acknowledged solely in Italy and Greece. She was worshipped in Asia. Bubalus presented a statue of the goddess to the city of Smyrna. She was generally represented with the pole-star on her head, and the horn of plenty in her left hand, the one designating her power over the world, and the other implying that all blessings are in her gift.

In her chapel at Ægira her statue was placed beside that of Venus, because she was supposed to be of more importance in the concerns of Love, than beauty, virtue, or wealth; and in her temple in Bœotia, she appears holding in her arms an infant Plutus, as if she was the mother and nurse of the god of riches. Pausanias asserts that Greece abounded with statues, temples, altars, medals, and bas-reliefs, of this deity.

Pliny asserts her universal authority. Toto quippe mundo, in locis omnibus, Fortuna sola vocatur, sola laudatur, et cum conviciis colitur. Volubilis a plerisque, vero et cæca etiam estimata, vaga, inconstans, varia, indignorum faulrix. Huic omnia expensa, et

in tota ratione mortalium utramque paginam facit. Nat. Hist. lib. ii. c. 7.

Bishop Berkeley has quoted some authorities to prove, that the antients understood nothing more by Necessity and Fate, than the eternal reason of the law of nature, or the spiritual power by which the order of the world is administered and disposed. *Siris*, p. 271. But necessity and fate are directly opposed, by the best writers of antiquity, to the will and power of the gods, and plainly described as separate and distinct existences, and the irresistible rulers of earth and heaven. When Jupiter wished to save Patroclus, he inquired into the decree of Destiny, and was compelled to resign the hero to his fate. *Il.* xx. Ovid asserts that the destiny of things is written on adamant, and describes Jupiter and Venus as proceeding to consult the Fates, in order to discover what was to be the lot of Julius Cæsar. *Metamorph.* lib. xv. Diana, in the *Phædra* of Euripides, approaches to console the expiring Hypolitus. I cannot, says she, change the order of destiny, but I shall revenge your death, by sacrificing some lover favoured by Venus. Hesiod, in his *Genealogy of the Gods*, adverts also to this all-governing power, and describes it as the progeny of Night and Erebus; and Homer says, that the destiny of Achilles was twined, at his birth, with the thread of life, and that, though the mightiest of the gods were his friends, his fate must be fulfilled. *Iliad.* xx.

The philosophers adopted the opinion of the poets. Quod fore paratum est, id summum exuperat Jovem. *Cicer. De Divinat.* lib. ii. c. 10. Τῇ περὶ μέρους μοίρῃ ἀδύνατον ἐστὶν ἀποφυγεῖν καὶ τῷ θεῷ. *Herodot.* lib. i. c. 91. Eadem necessitas et deos alligat. Irrevocabilis divina pariter atque humana cursus vebit. *Seneca De Provid.* c. v. p. 195. Pausanias enumerates the temples dedicated to Necessity, in many parts of Greece; and Plato affirmed that there were three Destinies, and pictures them with all the fancy and enthusiasm of the poet. Sometimes he places them in the celestial spheres. Their vestments are of the purest white, spotted with stars. Their heads are adorned with radiant diadems. They are seated on thrones blazing with the light of heaven; and they sing, in a voice more sweet than that of the Syrens, of things past, present, and to come. On other occasions, the philosopher imagines a string of diamonds, one end of which is lost in the heavens, and another touches the earth. Necessity, placed on a mighty and magnificent altar, holds this string between her knees, and the three Destinies, who are seated at the foot of the altar, turn it incessantly in their hands, and, as they turn it, decide the fate of the Universe. *Plato. De Repub.* lib. x.

NOTE L. p. 79.

IT may not be useless to advert a little more minutely to the opinions entertained by the schools of Greece and Italy, on the subject of a Providence.

Multa cernunt haruspices, say the Stoics, multa augures provident, multa oraculis declarantur, multa somniâ, multa portentis; quibus cognitis multæ sæpe res hominum sententia atque utilitate partæ, multa etiam pericula depulsa sunt. Hæc, igitur, non ab alio alicui quam a Diis immortalibus data. Cicer. De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. § 65.

Epicetetus and Marcus Antoninus entertained the same belief. Enchirid. § 24. Marc. Antonin. lib. i. § 17.

Plato, in his *Phædo*, speaks of a prophetic madness inspired by the gods, and adverts to the various occasions in which the ecstatic insanity of the Priestess of Apollo and of Dodona had communicated the will of heaven.

Cicero admits that, if one class of philosophers asserted a Providence, the doctrine was violently opposed by another. *Utrum nihil agunt Dii, an contra, magna dissensio est.* De Nat. Deor. lib. i.

Pliny contemptuously discarded the opinion that the gods condescended to interfere in the management of human affairs. Nat. Hist. lib. ii. c. 7. And Minutius Felix, p. 95. ed. Var. scarcely avows even a partial and occasional interposition.

Cæcilius, as quoted by Minutius Felix, *ib.* says—*Christiani quæ monstra, quæ portenta confingunt? Deum illum suum, quem nec ostendere possunt nec videre, in omnium mores, omnium actus, verba etiam, et occulta cogitationes diligenter inquirere, molestum illum volunt, inquietum, impudenter curiosum: siquidem instat factis omnibus, locis omnibus interceptus, cum nec singulos in servire posset per universa districtus, nec universis sufficit, in singulis occupatus.*

Seneca seems to have believed that individuals might, on some occasions, be thought worthy of the care of the gods. *Interdum curiosi singulorum.* Epist. 95.

NOTE M. p. 88.

“SURELY those who believe, and those who Judaize, and Christians, and Sabians, whoever believeth in God in the last day,

they shall know their reward, and no fear shall come on them." Kor. ch. ii. vol. i. p. 12, 13. Yet, when it was required of the impostor to speak in a bolder-tone, such an expectation was to be sanctioned neither in Jew nor Christian. For "whosoever followeth any other religion than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him, and in the next world he shall be of those who perish." Kor. ch. iii. vol. i. p. 72. The learned Abulkasan Habalallah has written a treatise, *De abrogante et abrogato*, in which he enumerates a great number of abrogations or contradictions, of this nature, in the Koran.

The abrogations of the Koran are acknowledged and vindicated. "When we substitute in the Koran an abrogating verse in lieu of a verse abrogated, (and God knoweth the fitness best of that which he reveals,)" &c.—Kor. ch. xvi. vol. ii. p. 89. Never surely was there a more convenient doctrine. It perfectly enabled the prophet to meet all contingencies, and to remedy preceding inadvertence or indiscretion, by subsequent ordinances, better adapted to times and circumstances. The policy was crafty, but the impiety was gross; and Providence was represented as unstable and variable, to meet the vilest purposes of mortal mutability.

NOTE N. p. 89.

THE examination of the sepulchre is founded on express tradition from Mahomet, and is plainly alluded to in the Koran, Ch. viii. vol. i. p. 47. It is, therefore, believed by every orthodox Mussulman; and the graves of the faithful are so made, that the buried bodies may more easily sit up in them during the examination of the angel. Sale, Prelim. Disc. sect iv. p. 57.

When the corpse is laid in the grave, it is received by an attending angel, who waits the approach of two black and hideous "Examiners," Menkir and Nakir. These, on the night of the burial, order the departed mortal to sit upright in the grave, and strictly interrogate him as to the purity of his belief in the unity of God, and in the mission of the prophet. If he answer rightly, they suffer him to rest in peace, and refresh his body with a breath of the air of Paradise. But, should they detect unsoundness in his faith, they seize him with irresistible might, and beat his temples with iron maces, till he roars aloud, and his shrieks are heard by every being from east to west but genii and men. They, then, press the earth on the corpse, "which is to be gnawed and stung till the resurrection by ninety-nine dragons, each with seven heads."

NOTE O. p. 93.

THE story of the counterfeit body, as related by Abulfeda, and other Mahommedan writers, affords a curious specimen of Arabian romance. "Solomon, having taken Sodom, and slain its king, brought away the king's daughter, who became his favourite; but, because she ceased not to lament the death of her father, Solomon ordered the devils to make an image of him for her consolation; which being done, she and her maids worshipped the image morning and evening. At length, the wisest of kings, being informed of their idolatry, and having chastised the women, went out into a desert, and there made supplication to God, who did not think fit, however, to suffer his negligence to pass with impunity. It was Solomon's custom, when he washed himself, to intrust his signet, on which depended the preservation of his crown, to his concubine Anina. One day, therefore, when she had the ring in her custody, a devil named Sakkar came to her in the shape of Solomon, and received the ring from her, by virtue of which he became sovereign of the kingdom, and sat on the throne in the shape which he had borrowed. Solomon, in the mean time, being changed in outward appearance, was obliged to wander about, and to beg for his subsistence, till, at length, after the space of forty days, which was the time the image had been worshipped at his house, the devil fled away, and threw the signet into the sea. The signet was swallowed by a fish, which being taken and brought to Solomon, was found to contain the ring in its belly. The monarch by this means recovered his kingdom, and he took the devil Sakkar, and tied a great stone about his neck, and threw him into the lake of Tiberias." Sale, note on Kor. ch. xxxviii. vol. ii. p. 321.

NOTE P. p. 109.

THIS was the common but ineffectual topic of antient consolation. When Admetus complains of the loss of his wife, the chorus coldly inform him, that he is not the first, and will not be the last, to suffer such a calamity; and, moreover, that what is inevitable must be endured, and that mortals were born to die, and must learn to submit. Such was the sole comfort tendered to a man bending under the burden of the most cruel calamity. Yet, where could the poet have found a better opportunity for expatiating on more effectual topics of consolation, if his religion had supplied them? *Alcest. act ii. scene ii.*

NOTE Q. p. 110.

CEDIPUS was the victim of the Fates and Furies. Venus descended from heaven to destroy the unoffending Hypolitus, whom she had in vain endeavoured to inspire with a guilty passion; and involved, in her scheme of vengeance, the injured Theseus, as well as her favourite Phædra. Eurip. Hypol. act i. scene i. Amphytrion, in the midst of innumerable calamities, exclaims, "Thou, O Jupiter, seducedst the unhappy Alcmena, but thou forgettest what is due to the afflicted and insulted husband." Eurip. Hercul. Furens, act i. Thetis hastens from the depths of the ocean to soothe the sorrow of Achilles; but she laments where she should console, and, instead of advising the hero to repose his trust in the gods, she solely informs him of the approach of his death, and leaves him to derive from the intelligence what comfort he may. Il. xviii. Diana is introduced, in the same manner, to alleviate the sufferings of an expiring favourite. What balm does she bring? She talks to him only of posthumous celebrity, and promises that the virgins of Træzen shall scatter their tresses and shed their tears over his tomb. Eurip. Hypol. act v. scene v.

NOTE R. p. 117

ETIAM fulmina fortunæ contemnemus cum paratum sit illud ex hesternâ disputatione perfugium. The perfugium is the grave. Tuscul. Disput. lib. ii. § 27.

Cicero frequently adverts to suicide as the legitimate resource of afflicted man. Sic urgentibus asperis et odiosis doloribus, si tanti sint ut ferendi non sint, quo sit confugiendum vides. Tuscul. lib. ii. § 27. In quo aut sunt plus contraria, aut fore videntur, officium est e vita excedere. Cicer. De Finib. lib. iii. § 18. Vetus est enim; ubi non sis, qui fueris, non esse cur velis vivere. Cicer. Epist. Fam. lib. vii. § 3. See also Tuscul. lib. i. § 30. Tuscul. lib. v. Such, after all his reasoning, was the consolation which Cicero extended to the wretched; and that at which the humble Christian would tremble, was the boast and glory of the most enlightened of the Heathen.

The doctrine was universally admitted by the Greeks and Romans. When the chorus, in the Hypolitus of Euripides, expatiate on the suicide of Phædra, they are so far from condemning the act, that they applaud it as necessary and wise. A son, in the

play of Terence, is unhappy, and he informs his father that he desires to die. The father calmly replies, Prius quæro, diace, quid sit vivere. Ubi scies, si displicebit vita, tunc isthoc utitur. Heautont. act v. sc. ii. Plutarch, in Solon, speaks of suicide in the same strain; and the opinion was equally diffused among the learned and the vulgar.

NOTE S. p. 122.

MR. BLACKADAR, who was well acquainted with the rites and practices of Braminical superstition, speaks of one class of these unhappy beings, as follows: "Heretics were never admitted into the temples, and should it ever happen the place is defiled, the Bramina purify it by performing certain ceremonies which consist in rubbing the walls with cow dung, sprinkling them with urine, and making an offering." Archæolog. vol. x.

NOTE T. p. 124.

THE answer given by the Gymnosophists to Alexander, admits the doctrine of suicide in its fullest extent. "How long does it become a man to live? As long as he does not think death better than life." Plut. in Alexand. Strabo, lib. xv.

The modes of voluntary death are clearly enumerated. The Hindu may, first, starve himself to death; secondly, wrap himself in cow dung, and, setting it on fire, perish in the flames; thirdly, bury himself in a grave of snow; fourthly, expose himself in the water of the Ganges, to be devoured by the alligator, or carried off by the tide; fifthly, open the veins of his throat at the confluence of the Mallahabud, and the Ganges. The chapter of the Ayeen Akbery which contains this enumeration is entitled, "Meritorious kinds of Suicide." Ayeen Akbery, v. iii. p. 274. The Bramin sometimes has recourse to excessive eating, and dies of impletion. Orme, Hist. Fragm. p. 434.

NOTE U.

[Reference to this Note omitted in p. 128.]

THE doctrine of predestination is frequently and explicitly announced in the Koran.

"Unto every nation is a fixed term decreed; when the term thereof is expired, they shall not have respect for an hour." Kor. ch. x. vol. ii. p. 8.

"The fate of every man is bound round his neck." Kor. ch. xvii. vol. ii. p. 98.

"Of this doctrine," says Sale, "Mahomet made great use, encouraging his followers to fight without fear, and even desperately, for the propagation of the faith, by representing to them that all their caution would not avert the inevitable destiny, or prolong their lives for a moment." Sale's Kor. Dissertat. sect. iv. p. 137.

Whenever the impostor found it necessary to pillage and desolate a nation, its "term" was then said to have "expired," and it was no longer to have "respite for an hour." The Mussulman was thus instructed to oppose the enemies of his creed, not merely as foes to be subdued, but as outcasts to be extirpated; and the ferocious valour with which he went forth to the subversion of the empires of the Infidel, was to be sanctioned and sanctified as a means in the hand of the Almighty for accomplishing the decrees of eternal wisdom.

NOTE V. p. 141.

THE whole of this beautiful and affecting story has been rejected by some critics as spurious, and by others as affording encouragement to sin. But it is not spurious. Ambrose alludes to it. *Semper decentatam quæstionem et celeberram, absolutio non fuisse mulieris ejus, quæ in libro Evangelii Johannis adulterii rea oblata Christo. Epist. lib. ix. Ep. 76.* The Apostolical Canons also acknowledge it. *Lib. ii. c. 24. p. 173, 4.* It was to be found, says Saint Jerome, in multis Græcis et Latinis codicibus. *Lib. ii. Advers. Paleg. F. 103.* It is contained in the sixteen Manuscripts of Stephanus, and in sixteen out of seventeen of Beza. And it is recited in the eighth canon of Eusebius, No. 86, referring to Saint John—Nor does it encourage sin. The woman is forgiven conditionally, not absolutely. "Go, and sin no more." The absolution is granted, but the condition of reformation is annexed, and the very mercy which is conferred becomes a means and motive of virtue.

NOTE W. p. 152.

THE instances are numerous. It would even appear that supplication for pardon was less necessary, than petitions for the aid

which the designs of the criminal might require, or than oblations to conciliate the assenting favour of the gods. When Clytemnestra offered her sacrifices at the altar of Apollo, she evinced no sorrow for the adultery and murder which called for punishment. The preservation of the happiness which she enjoyed with her paramour on the throne of the Atridæ, and the further indulgence of the vile adultery in which she lived, were the objects of her supplications ; and her devotion evidently sprang, not from a sense of her guilt, but from the apprehension that she might be deprived of its fruits. Sophocl. *Electr.* act ii. sc. i.

NOTE X. p. 152.

VARIOUS habits were used by the priesthood, according to the fancied temper or inclination of the gods whose rights were solemnized. They who sacrificed to the infernal gods were clothed in black, to the celestial, in purple. In the worship of Apollo, the priest was crowned with laurel, in that of Hercules, with poplar, in that of other deities with garlands of flowers or ears of wheat, or with a helmet crested with tufts of feathers, or with a sacred mitre, from which, on each side, hung a long and splendid ribband. Potter. *Grec. Antiq.* vol. i. lib. ii. p. 265. Virgil. *Æneid.* *Æn.* x. v. 538. Callimach. in *Cer. Polyæn.* lib. viii. c. 59. The sacerdotal robes were of royal magnificence, and were similar to those adopted by Æschines for the higher characters of his tragedies. Athenæus, lib. xv. c. 5. p. 674.

NOTE Y. p. 155.

THE Romans were particularly devoted to the practice of auguration. Auguriis certe, sacerdotisque augurium tantus honor acceperat, ut nihil belli, domique, postea, nisi auspicato quereretur; consilia populi, exercitus vocati, summa rerum, ubi aves non admississent, diremirentur. Livy, lib. i. § 36.

This superstitious confidence in external signs, extended from the lowest to the highest of the people. A fish having been cast at the feet of Augustus, as he was walking on the sea-shore, the emperor considered the incident as an omen of success in an enterprise which he meditated ; and, on another occasion, having learned that the name of an ass which he accidentally met was called Nikos or Victorious, he no longer doubted of the conti-

nuance of his prosperity and good fortune. He afterwards erected statues of brass to the fish, and to the ass, and its owner. Suet. in Vit. August. § 96.

The victims, led by a long robe, were allowed to approach gently to the altar. "If the beast by any chance escaped the stroke, leaped after it, did not fall prone upon the ground, kicked and stamped, was restless as though it expired with pain and difficulty, did not bleed freely, and was a long time in dying, it was thought unacceptable to the gods; all these being unlucky omens, as their contraries were tokens of the divine will." Pott. Grec. Antiq. vol. i. lib. ii. ch. iv. p. 270.

NOTE Z. p. 159.

THE invocation of malevolent deities was regarded as criminal by some of the philosophers of Greece. It was authorized, however, by the religion of the times; and the arts of holy magic, which were of early origin, and almost in universal practice, continued to be studied and exercised by the philosophers of Greece and Italy, in the first ages of Christianity. Venons maintenant à la magic, qui faisoit un des principaux dogmes de la Theologie Payenne, et qui est, en meme temps, celle de toutes qui a en les plus illustres partisans, surtout parmi les philosophes qui vivoient dans les premieres siecles du Christianisme. Bannier. Mytholog. tom. i. p. 396.

The Abbe is justified in the account which he gives of the two species of invocation. L'une, et c'etoit celle qui avoit recours aux Dieux bienfaisant, fut nommé Theurgie; l'autre, qui n'avoit pour objet que de faire le mal, et qui pour cela n'invoquoit que de Genies malfaisantes, fut apellé Goetie. Les philosophes, et les gens les plus vertueux, se faisoient honneur d'être initiés dans les mysteres de Theurgie. La Goetie etoit bien differente. Tout la rendoit egale-ment odieuse et meprisable. Id. vol. i. p. 396, 397.

NOTE A. A. p. 161.

PLUTARCH, in Lycurg. in Alexand. &c. records some of these oblations with the frigid indifference of a genuine Stoic.

When the sacrifice of Iphigenia was to be solemnized, the paternal anguish of Agamemnon, and the supplicating love of Achilles,

to whom the devoted girl was espoused, were compelled to submit to the pious fury by which the oblation was required. The chorus, in the tragedy, lament her fate, but so far are they from upbraiding the cruelty of the goddess who was to be soothed by her blood, that they implore the angry divinity to accept the offering with favour, as an evidence of the piety and humility of her votaries.

Polyxena was sacrificed with similar barbarity to appease the manes of Achilles; and all the hideous circumstances of the act are enumerated with a melancholy and unfeeling minuteness. Eurip. *Hecub.* act iii. The poet saw no reason to condemn the sacrifice, or the religion which claimed it.

With the same frigid indifference Virgil has recorded the sacrifice offered by the religious zeal of the pious *Æneas*.

----- Sulmone creatos
Quatuor hic juvenes; totidem, quos educat Ufens,
Viventes rapit: inferias quos immolet umbris,
Captivoque rogi perfundat sanguine flammæ.

Æneid. lib. x. l. 517.

This dreadful practice continued to exist when the taste and learning of the Greeks had acquired their greatest lustre. Alexander, the pupil of the grave and thinking Stagyræ, was impressed with the holiness of such oblations; and he coldly sacrificed the devoted tribe of the Cussæans, men, women, and children, as an oblation to the manes of the lamented Hæphæstion. Plut. In *Alexand.* Not a word of reprobation is uttered by the biographer.

NOTE B. B. p. 164.

THE forms of Hindu devotion are innumerable. See Paterson, on the origin of the Hindu religion, and Colebrook's Remarks. *Asiat. Register*, vol. viii. 68. 69. 83. Orme has adverted to the same subject. *Military Transact. in the East*, vol. i. p. 6, and *Dissertat.* vol. i. p. 34. Let the reader also turn to the *Ayeen Akbery*, vol. iii. p. 226. The worship of the snake is there particularly described, in all the variety of its observances. Women are commonly charged with the ceremony. At certain periods, a number of females assemble at a tank, shaded by the male *Arichi*, and the female *Argosi*. Under these trees they deposit a stone figure, on which is represented an impure emblem between two snakes. They then perform their ablutions with prescriptive scrupulosity, and, thus purified, they proceed to wash the emblem, to

burn before it certain pieces of wood according to certain rules, to cover it with fresh and fragrant flowers, to bow down fervently but humbly before it, and to invoke it for the blessing of a numerous progeny, and of a contented husband.

One of the Poojas from which these solemnities are extracted, includes sixteen ceremonies of worship equally tedious and minute. After the necessary ablutions are performed, the devotee is to sit down, look towards the east or north, draw up his legs in front, take some water and rice in his hand, sprinkle with both the idol which he adores, and, after soothing him by worship, supplicate his favour. He next proceeds to make his oblations of sandal flowers, betel, and rice; to pour water from a white conch on the god; to ring a bell; to dry the divinity with a cloth; to replace it on its pedestal; to robe it in rich garments; to cast over it flowers and green leaves; to fumigate it with rich essences; to place before it a lamp lighted with ghee, and then, after having prostrated himself at full length on the ground, to walk several times round the statue, to stand, for a certain period, in the posture of a slave, and, at length, to solicit the permission of the idol to depart. Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 226. These observances constitute but a small portion of the sixteen ceremonies prescribed in the Poojas.

NOTE C. C. p. 165.

DR. BUCHANNAK, in the year 1807, saw a young man devoting himself before a temple dedicated to an idol. "The young man was of a good figure, healthy complexion, and comely aspect. He had a garland of flowers round his neck, his long black hair was dishevelled. He danced, for some time, before the idol, sang the praises of the god in an enthusiastic strain, and then completed the oblation." *Christ. Research.* p. 146.

These sacrifices were encouraged as means of appeasing the gods. "Some time since," says the author of *Sketches of the History, &c. of the Hindus*, "we saw an aged father of a numerous family, who devoted himself to the flames to satisfy the vengeance of some deity, who, as he imagined, had afflicted his household and neighbourhood with an epidemical disease."

NOTE D. D. p. 165.

THE text of the *Heetopades*, and Mr. Wilkins' explanatory notes, afford ample evidence of the reality of these execrable oblations.

In one of the apologues of the Heetopades, a father is introduced, who, having by the command of the goddess Cali, led his son to the altar, offered up the child with ferocious zeal, while he exclaimed, "Accept the victim, O goddess, and be propitious." In another apologue of the same work, it is affirmed that a husband may sell his wife to the gods, that is, devote her to the Naramedha, or human sacrifice. Heetopades, p. 222, and note by the translator, p. 185.

Some of the forms prescribed for the regulation of human sacrifices, are detailed in the following passage :

"Let the human victim be sacrificed at a place of worship, or at a cemetery where dead bodies are buried. Let the victim be a person of goodly appearance, prepared by oblations and requisite ceremonies, adorned with chaplets of flowers, and smeared with sandal wood. Then let the sacrificer worship Brama in the cavity of the victim's skull, the earth in his nose, in his ears the subtle æther, in his tongue the regents of speech, and Vishnu in his mouth. Let him worship the moon in his forehead, Indra on his left cheek, death in his throat, and Varieua between the eye-brows—then, worshipping the king of serpents in the stomach of the victim, let him pronounce the following mantra—O, thou, who art an assemblage of all the deities, bestow thy protection upon me, and, at the same time, O most excellent, attain supreme bliss thyself, and charm Bhagavati in thy last moments, by copious streams of blood spouting from the arteries of thy fleshy neck."

When these rules are fulfilled, "Brama and all the other deities assemble in the victim, and be he ever so great a sinner, he becomes pure from sin, his blood changes to ambrosia, and he gains the love of Mahadevi, the goddess of Yog and Nidra, who is the goddess of the universe itself." Sanguinary Chap. of the Calica Purana. Asiat. Research. vol. v. ch. xxiii. Ayeen Akbery, vol. ii. p. 133. Roger Porte Ouverte, p. 251. Heetopades, 185. 322. Voyage le Sonnarat. v. i. p. 207.

NOTE E. E. p. 167.

THERE is a still more extraordinary picture of a true penitent, in the Sacontala, a work of high character among the Hindus. "You see a pious Yogi, motionless as a pollard, holding his thick bushy hair, and fixing his eyes on the solar orb. Mark! his body is covered with a white ant's edifice made of clay. The skin of a snake supplies the place of his sacerdotal thread, and a part of

it girds his loins. A number of knotty plants circle and wound his neck, and surrounding birds nests almost conceal his shoulders."

See for further details on this subject, Yajur Veda, translated by Sir William Jones, in his unfinished dissertation on the primæval religion of India. Dialogue in the Mahabarat between Krishnu and Arjoon. Maurice, Hist. of Hindostan. Ocean of Wisdom, translated by Mr. Kindersley; and Strabo, lib. xv.

NOTE F. F. p. 170.

ALMOST every pagoda has its train of dancing girls, who bring a revenue to the priests. They are marked with a trident on the right arm, as a badge of their servitude to the temple. The number of girls attached to the temple of Madras, is about three hundred. Description of the great Pagoda of Madera. Archæol. v. x.

These girls, the instruments of priestly avarice, and the corruptors of the people, are distinguished by many important privileges. They are permitted to heighten their licentiousness by fermented liquors, and may indulge in every kind of meats except beef; and if any of the band commit a crime which subjects her property to confiscation, her clothes, her jewels, and her dwelling are exempted from the penalty, as a soldier, says Herbert, is left the implements of his profession.

"Nay more," continues the same writer, "such is the stupid folly of the Hindus, that they persuade their fanatic daughters to become base strumpets to please their fancy and enrich their pagoda, insomuch as it is a great wonder to see so many girls, at such immaturity," &c. Some Yeares Travels into Asia by Th. Herbert, p. 310.

NOTE G. G. p. 188.

LORD BOLINGBROKE, the advocate of human reason, has himself admitted, that the wisest of the philosophers of antiquity were sensible of the necessity of a divine revelation, for the proper instruction of mankind in the doctrines of devotion. Boling. Works, vol. v. p. 214, 215, 216. The acknowledgments of Socrates and of Jamblichus, on this subject, are clear and explicit. Plato, In Alcibiad. ii. and Jamblich. In Vit. Pythagor. cap. xxvii.

"Il faut necessairement que Dieu ait ordonné un culte a l'homme. Quel chaos affreux ne s'ensuivroit il pas, si chacun avoit une pensée differente sur le culte, qu'on doit a la divinite."

L'esprit de l'homme, suget a s'égarrer, retomberoit bientôt dans les erreurs de l'idolatrie." Lettr. Juiv. Lett. xxiii.

NOTE H. H. p. 194.

THE account which I have given of the rites of Bacchus affords but a faint picture of the enormities which were practised at those celebrities, and which I am unwilling to enumerate in a modern language.

In Italiæ compitis sacra Liberi celebrata cum tantâ licentiâ turpitudinis, ut in ejus honorem pudenda virilia colerentur. Nam hoc turpe membrum, per Liberi dies festos cum honore magno plostellis positum, prius rure in compitis, et usque in urbem vectabatur.—Uni Liberi totus mensis tribuebatur cujus diebus omnes flagitiosisimis verbis uterentur, donec illud membrum per forum transvectum esset, atque in loco suo quiescerit. Cui membro palam coronam necesse erat imponere. Augustin De Civitate Dei, lib. vii. c. 21. Augustin quotes from Varro.

Illic in orgiis Bacchi, inter ebrias puellas et senos, cum scelerum pompa procederet, alter, nigro amictu teter, alter ostenso angue terribilis, alter cruentus ore dum viva pecoris membra discerpit. Jul. Firmius. De Error. Profan. Rel.

Bacchanalia pretermittamus immania, quibus nomen omophagiis Græcum est, in quibus sequestrata pectoris sanitate, circumplicatis vos anguibus, atque, ut vos plenos Dei numine ac majestate decetis, caprorum reclamantium viscera cruentatis oris dissipatis. Arnob. Advers. Gent. lib. v. p. 169.

These may be considered as doubtful witnesses, and Livy may be thought more worthy of credit. Yet the purity of his page is violated by details still more disgusting and hideous. In promiscuo sacra sint, et permisti viri feminis, et noctis licentia accesserit; nihil ubi facinoris, nihil flagitii pretermisum. Plura virorum inter sese quam foeminarum esse stupra. Si qui minus patientes dedecoris sint, et pigriores ad facinas, pro victimis immolari nihil nefas ducere. Hanc summam inter eos religionem esse - - - In his nobiles quosdam viros, foeminasque - - - Biennio proximo institutum esse ne quis major viginti annis initiaretur. Liv. Hist. lib. xxxix

Even Plato, according to Diogenes Laertes, admitted that an extravagant god, like Bacchus, required an extravagant worship. Diog. Laert. lib. iii. segm. 39.

Alexander, says Plutarch, celebrated with some of his friends the feast of Bacchus. During the continuance of the festival the whole army rivalled the mad merriment of their royal leader. The sound of wanton music and obscene songs was every where heard; and every where were beheld the emulous and licentious frolicks of women, who accompanied and heightened the madness of the procession. The whole scene, so disorderly and dissolute, was closed by an open exhibition of indecent figures, representing all the obscenities of the Bacchanalia, &c. Plut. In Alexandr.

In a tragedy of Euripides, the festival of the Bacchanalia is minutely described. The Bacchanals are smitten with a divine fury. A chorus of women adapt their songs to the occasion; and, having poured their execrations on the unhappy Pentheus, who had prohibited the rite as immodest and impure, they desire, with very consistent enthusiasm, to be transported to Cyprus, the happy residence of Venus and the loves, or to Paphos or Olympus, where Cupid and the Graces enjoy their sports. There they might more freely celebrate the orgies of their god, and indulge in the kindred delights of love and wine. The whole celebrity is represented in the drama, as a scene of madness, intoxication, fury, murder, and obscenity. Eurip. Bacchant. act i.

Petronius glances at some of the particulars of this hideous celebrity. *Curiositas facellum intrare etiam nos impulit, ubique complures, Bacchantum instar, mulieres vidimus, quæ in manu dextra fascinosos Priapinos gestabant. Plus videre non licuit, nam ut nos animadverterunt, tum magnum clamorem sustulère, &c.* Petr. Sat. vol. i. p. 106.

See also, Diod. Sicul. lib. i. p. 98; and Strabo, lib. xvii. p. 98, who adverts to the worship in terms which I am unwilling to quote.

Virgil describes these orgies with his usual felicity, and he attributes the origin, or renewal, of them to the instigation of Alecto:

*Fama volat : furiisque accensas pectore matres
Idem omnes simul ardor agit nova quærere tecta.
Deseruere domos : ventis dant colla comasque :
Ast aliæ tremulis ululatibus æthera complent.*

Æn. vii. 392.

*Talem inter sylvas, inter deserta ferarum,
Reginam Alecto stimulis agit undique Bacchi.*

Æn. vii. 404.

NOTE I. I. p. 195.

"THE victims, two goats, being slain, the priests made thongs of the goat skins, which they took in their hands, and ran with them all about the city, stark naked, and so they struck with those thongs all they met in their way. The young wives were contented to be stricken with them," &c. &c. Godwin, *Rom. Antiq.* lib. ii. c. 1.

The prudent policy of Augustus was anxious to restrain by law the growing licentiousness of public manners; yet the festival of the Lupercalia, which had begun, it seems, to decline, was revived with his approbation and by his decree. Sueton. in August.

NOTE K. K. p. 195.

THE Aphrodisia were observed in every part of Greece, but especially at Corinth. The votaries of the goddess vowed to consecrate to her a certain number of women, according to the importance of the suit they had to prefer. Athenæ. *Deipnosoph.* lib. xiii. c. 6. Strabo mentions the number of courtezans dedicated to her service, lib. viii. p. 581.

These rites had spread widely over the earth. Herodot. lib. i. Lucian, *Oper.* vol. ii. p. 658; and I quote with reluctance the brief description of them from the work of Julius Firmius. *Videre est in ipsis templis, cum publico gemitu, miseranda ludibria, viros muliebria pati, et hanc impuri et impudicis corporis tabem gloriosa ostentatione detegere. Publicant facinora sua, et contemnati corporis vitium cum maxima delectationes macula confitentur.* *De Error. Profan. Relig.* pp. 10, 11. Ed. 1678. See also Spenser de *Leg. Hebr.* lib. ii. c. 22, 23.

These monstrous rites were authorized by law, and sanctioned by the assent or practice of sages and philosophers. *Quæ omnia sapiens servabit tanquam legibus jussa.* Varro apud August. de *Civit. Dei.* lib. vi. c. 10.

A thousand women, consecrated to Venus by the wanton piety of male and female votaries, sustained the character, and enriched the funds, of the temple of Corinth. Strabo, lib. viii. p. 581; lib. xii. p. 837. Well might Saint Peter exclaim, that "the Gentiles walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4; and even the indignant fervour of Saint Paul has not condemned the rites to which

Saint Peter here adverts, with more than sufficient earnestness. 1st Epist. to Rom. ch xxiv; and to Ephes. iv. 18, 19.

NOTE L. L. p. 203.

KALLEE, or the black goddess, presides over these savage rites. Holwel, *Fasts and Festivals of the Gentoos*, p. 131; and the sacrifice is deemed so necessary, that even the daughters of rajahs and kings are not permitted to evade it. Orme, *Histor. Frag.* 261.

In the code of Gentoo laws, translated by Mr. Halhead, in 1777, there are various passages which recommend and command this oblation of the wife to the manes of her husband; and in the chapter relative to women, it is expressly stated, "that it is proper for a woman, after her husband's death, to burn herself in the same fire with his corse; and that every woman who thus burns herself shall remain in Paradise with her husband three scores and fifty lacks of years."

The sacrifice of the widow has been at all times required and paid. Even at the present period, "the number of widows who are annually burned in the British territories in Hindostan is so great, that it would appear incredible to those who have not inquired into the fact. According to an accurate report, made by persons of the Hindu caste, under the superintendence of the professor of Sanscrit and Bengalee language in the college of Fort William, the number, within a circle of thirty miles diameter round Calcutta, amounted, from the 15th of April to the 15th of October 1804, to one hundred and fifteen; and, in the account taken in 1803, the number amounted in the same district, for a similar period, to three hundred and seventy-five." Buchan. *Christ. Research.*

NOTE M. M. p. 205.

ONE of these females was a venerable lady with white locks, who had been long the object of public respect. She could not walk, and was, therefore, carried in a palanquin to the place of burning, and laid by the attendant Bramins on the funeral pile. The two other ladies were younger; and one of them, especially, of a beautiful and interesting countenance. The old lady was placed on one side by her husband, and the two other widows laid themselves down on the other side. The eldest son of the deceased lighted the

pile, and the victims were consumed, amid the shouts of the multitude. Buchan. *Christ. Research.* 149, 150.

Widows were frequently known to contend with each other for the honours of the pile; and Diodorus Siculus exhibits a beautiful and interesting example of these affecting and affectionate contests, lib. xix.

NOTE N. N. p. 207.

"THE idol is sometimes an irregular pyramidal stone, of about four or five hundred pounds weight, with two rich diamonds near the top to represent eyes, and the nose and mouth painted with vermillion." Holwel, *Feasts and Fasts of the Gentoos*. Collier, *Dict. Art. Narsingi*. See also *Description of the great Pagoda at Madura*, by Mr. Blackadar, *Archæolog.* vol. x. *Sketches of the History, &c. of the Hindus*.

Doctor Buchanan was present, in the year 1806, at the annual rites of the deity of Juggernaut. "A poor woman, says he, after having prostrated herself beneath the wheels of the carriage of the god, survived for two miserable hours; and, while she yet breathed, was conveyed to the place appropriated to the dead. In a short time nothing was left of her but the bones. The dogs and vultures fed on the lifeless or expiring victim, for the rites of sepulture were denied." Buchan. *Christ. Research.* pp. 139, 140, &c.

Herbert gives the following quaint but accurate account of these solemnities. "They have a massy, copper, gilded Pagod, mounted upon a triumphant chariot, moved by eight mighty wheels overlaid with gold. The ascent is easy by many steps, on which are placed, upon a solemn day, the priests; and many girls prostitute their bodies to the libidinous shame of wicked men. The procession follows; happy is that man, rich or poor, great or base, who can fasten a hand to draw the chariot; yea, they account them happiest who, out of a fanatic zeal, temerarily throw their fanatic bodies in the way, that by the ponderousness of the devil and his chariot, their wretched bodies may be crushed in pieces." Herbert. *Some Yeares Travels into Asia*, published in 1683.

NOTE O. O. p. 208.

AN account of the annual expense of the idol at Juggernaut was laid, not long since, before the English Government in the East. It is as follows :

For his table	-	-	-	-	-	£.4,514
Dress	-	-	-	-	-	339
Servants	-	-	-	-	-	1,259
Expenses at season of pilgrimage	-	-	-	-	-	1,373
Elephants and horses	-	-	-	-	-	378
Carriage	-	-	-	-	-	839
						<u>£.8,702</u>

One hundred and forty-three dancing girls are also maintained in the temple for his service. Buchan. Christ. Research.

NOTE P. P. p. 209.

DR. BUCHANNAN, in his Christian Researches, describes the following spectacle :—" On the morning after one of the sacrifices to the idol, I visited the Golgotha, the place at Juggernaut to which the dead and dying are conveyed, and I there beheld a poor woman cast out to breathe her last sigh. She was not yet dead. Two infants, doomed to perish with their mother, lay at her feet, watching the dogs and vultures which were preying on the surrounding bodies. The people, in the mean time, passed by, without appearing to notice either the mother or the children."

The sufferers, the theatre, the barbarity of the passers-by—what a scene!

NOTE Q. Q. p. 214.

THE order of castes is as follows:—

The first caste issued from the mouth of Brama, and is, therefore, called Bramin, or Wisdom.

The second from the arms, or strength, and is, therefore, named Chaterree.

The third from the belly or thighs, or nourish, and is from thence denominated Bice.

The fourth from the feet, subjection, and is called, for that reason, Sooder. Baghvat-Geeta, p. 130. Heetopades, 251.

NOTE R. R. p. 219.

THEY have dwelt, with disgusting minuteness, on the circumstances by which a fast may be broken ; and to bathe, to take a medicine, purposely to swallow the saliva, to enjoy the smell of a perfume, to vomit designedly, to kiss or to touch a woman, to breathe the air too freely, to indulge in speech, are among the offences which may render the abstinence of the most self-denying Mussulman of no effect. Mahomet was not less zealous for the observance of insignificant forms than these pious commentators on his doctrines.

NOTE S. S. p. 222.

THIS stone is set in silver, and placed about two cubits from the ground, in the wall of the South-east corner of the temple. The pilgrims kiss it with fervent devotion, and sometimes call it the right hand of God. It is supposed to be one of the precious stones of Paradise, and to have fallen from thence on the expulsion of Adam. For many ages it was white, but it has grown black from the touch of impure and sinful lips.

NOTE T. T. p. 223.

THE short quick pace with which the pilgrims proceed round the Caaba, is intended to prove that they have not been so enfeebled by their journey as to be incapacitated from resisting or chastising the enemies of the faith ; and the inquiring manner with which they look back, is to represent the solicitude of Hagar seeking water for her son. Sale, Prel. Disc. sect. iv.

NOTE U. U. p. 224.

FIVE months in the year, the first, seventh, eleventh, and twelfth, and that of Rhamadan, were set apart for fasts, and other solemn observances, by the reiterated command of the Koran. Kor. ch. iv. v. ix. See also Prideaux's *Life of Mahomet*, p. 64, and Reland de Jur. Milit. Moham. p. 5. In every other month, several days were also to be devoted to similar purposes. During the holy months all war was to be suspended, except war with the inf-

del. For him there was to be no remission and no rest. Kor. ch. ii. ix. If, to the time thus occupied in the services of religion, we add the months and years exhausted in pilgrimage, we may form some conjecture of the portion of life appropriated by the true Mussulman to holy observances.

NOTE V. V. p. 224.

THE pulpit of Mahomet is minutely described by the Mahomedan writers. It consisted of three steps. The prophet, when he was to address the people, sat on the highest step, and placed his feet on the second; Abu Beer sat on the second, and placed his feet on the third; and Omar sat on the lowest, and placed his feet on the ground.

Mahomet, when he preached, had accustomed himself to lean on the trunk of a palm-tree, which had been driven into the ground; but one day giving the preference to his pulpit, a sound issued from the neglected trunk, like the bellowing of a camel, and expressive of sorrow for the desertion of the prophet. Instantly the preacher descended from his pulpit, embraced the afflicted trunk, and addressed to it the most endearing language, till, at length, he restored it to peace and good humour. Pocock, *In Not. ad Spec. Hist. Arab.* p. 188. Eutychiuss, tom. ii. p. 360.

NOTE W. W. p. 225.

I CAN find but one passage in the Koran which glances at a priesthood. "Verily," said God to Abraham, "I will continue thee a model of religion to mankind." Kor. ch. ii. p. 24. The Arabic word Imam, here translated a model, is synonymous, says Sale, *In loco*, with Antistes; and the Mahomedans, on the authority of this passage, and the practice of their master, have established an order of priests, to whom they have given the name of Imams.

NOTE X. X. p. 225.

"WE hear in the streets but the exclamations of Ya Allah, O God; Allah Akbar, God most great; Allah taala, God most high. Every instant the ear is struck with some of the ninety-nine

epithets of God, such as Ya Vani, source of riches ; Ya Mastour, O Impenetrable. If a man sells bread or water, he does not cry bread or water, but, God is liberal, God is generous. Are these men devout? Yes, but without being the better for their devotion." Volney's Travels, ch. xxxix.

NOTE Y. Y. p. 230.

ADULTS were never baptized until they had been solemnly instructed in the doctrines of the Gospel, and their faith had been sufficiently enlightened and confirmed. " But *when* they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of heaven, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women." Acts viii. 12. " And Philip said to the Eunuch, *If* thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And Philip baptized him." Ib. 37, 38.

The persons who were first admitted to Christian baptism were adults, capable of comprehending the conditions of the admission. But as whole families are said to be baptized at once, Acts xvi. 15, 13, we cannot doubt that little children, who, according to St. Paul, " are holy," and to whom, according to an higher authority, " is the kingdom of God," were baptized among the rest. First Epist to Corinth. vii. 4. Mark x. 14. If the promise of the covenant is expressly said " to be to us and to our children," Acts ii. 39, without any limitation of age, why should not the children, since they partake of the promise, partake also of the sign? They are unable, indeed, to comprehend the conditions of baptism, but may they not be engaged, and will they not be bound, to fulfil them, when they are capable of doing so? Thus by the act of circumcision, children became debtors to the whole law, Galat. v. 3, not because they understood and admitted the obligation, but because they were bound to accept and fulfil it, when they arrived at years of discretion and judgment. See Secker's excellent Lectures. Lect. xxxv.

NOTE Z. Z. p. 261.

THE exposure of infants, a gentle term for infanticide, became the " prevailing and stubborn vice of antiquity." Gibbon, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ch. viii. It was a vice openly and

legitimately perpetrated, and the practice was as frequent as it was barbarous. When the husband, in the play, reproaches his wife for not having obeyed his orders in putting their child to death, the wife humbly replies—*Mi Chræmes, peccavi fateor; vincor; nunc hoc te obsecro, quanto tuus est animus natu gravior, ignoscentior, tanto sit, ut meæ stultitiæ in justitiâ tuâ sit aliquid præsidi.* Ter. *Heautontim*, Act iii. 5. What an apology from a mother, for listening to the humanity which pleaded for her child's life; and with what indifference is the crime meditated by Chremes mentioned on the stage!

In the *Hecyra* of the same author, we have another instance of this barbarous custom. *Hecyr.* Act iii. sc. 3.

The most eminent philosophers of Greece admitted the same paternal authority which Chremes claimed. They thought it just that the state should be freed from the burden of children who were not likely to contribute to its support; and men of the highest attainments were ignorant that it was a virtue to preserve, or a crime to take away, the life of an innocent child. *Dion. Halicar. Antiquit. Rom. lib. ii.* Seneca, *de Ira. lib. i. c. 15.* Cicero, *de Legib. lib. iii. c. 8.* Plato, *Republic. lib. v.* Aristot. *Polit. lib. vii. c. 16.* Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, Works, vol. ii. p. 534.

In the prevalence of the practice so authorized, the barbarity of it was forgotten; and he who could describe himself as the most humane of men—*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum*—might not think it a sin against humanity to order the murder of his child. Terence, *Heautontim*.

NOTE A. A. A. p. 263.

DIOGENES LAERTES has recorded many of the *Κυρίας δόξαι*, or fundamental maxims of his master, lib. x. segm. 150, 151. lib. x. segm. 77. I have not exaggerated, and Seneca sufficiently explains, them. *Nihil justum esse naturâ, et crimina vitanda esse quia metus vitari non possit.* Epist. 97. See also, *Athenæ. Deiphnos. lib. i. c. 17.* Cicero, *Tuscul. Disputat. lib. iii. § 18.* On this scheme corporeal gratification was every thing, and every thing, but as it referred to corporeal gratification, was nothing. Truth might be avowed, virtue obeyed, fame pursued, honour sought, but sense was the directing power, and its indulgence the sole motive. Yet Epicurus could write books about piety and morals. *Diog. Laert. lib. x. segm. 27.* Epictet. *Dissertat. lib. ii. ch. 20. Sect. 2, 3, 4.* Cicero, *de Nat. Deor. lib. i. c. 41.*

NOTE B. B. B. p. 266.

OBSIDIO patriæ, mors liberum, parentum servitus, &c. Seneca, Ep. 74. Of what consequence, says Epictetus, is the destruction of men and the overthrow of cities? Is there any thing lamentable in the death of oxen and sheep, or in the destruction of the nests of storks and swallows? What is there worse in the death of men? Dissertat. lib. i. c. 28. s. 3. What hath happened, saith the Stoic? My son is dead. Nothing more! What is there evil in such accidents? Or if you admit the evil, is not the door open to you, and who forbids you to depart? Epictet. Dissertat. lib. iii. c. 8. s. 2; and c. xxiv. s. 1. Id. lib. ii. c. 13. s. 2.

Est aliquid quo sapiens antecedit deum. Ille naturæ beneficio, non suo, sapiens est. Sen. Ep. liii. Jovem plus non posse quam bonus vir. Plura habet Jupiter quæ præstat hominibus, sed inter duos bonos non est melior qui est locupletior - - Sapiens tam æquo animo omnia apud alios videt contemniture, quam Jupiter: et hoc se magis suspicit, quod Jupiter uti illis non potest, sapiens non vult. Sen. Epist. ad fin. See also, Plutar. de Commun. Notit. Adv. Stoic. Opera, tom. ii. p. 1076. B.

NOTE C. C. C. p. 324.

NAM mihi cum multa eximia divinaque videntur Athenæ tux peperisse, atque in vita hominum attulisse, tum nihil melius illis mysteriis quibus ex agresti immanique vita exculi adhumanitatem et mitigati sumus: initiaque, ut appellantur, ita revera principia vitæ cognovimus; neque solum cum lætitia vivendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi. De Legib. lib. ii. c. 14. The orator affirms, perhaps, more than the philosopher believed. He knew, if we may judge by his own academical scepticism, that the "spes melior moriendi" was very imperfectly imparted in the mysteries; and to him who so often speaks of the popular superstition, it must have been clear that religion derived no advantage from the communications, whatever they were, of the cave of Eleusis.

Of the imposing forms observed, and the powerful delusions practised, in the mysteries, some are described by Claudian, in a manner which sufficiently attests the artifices of the priesthood:

Jam mihi cernuntur trepidis delubra mœveri
Sedibus, et clarum dispergere fulmina lucem

Adventum testatâ dei. Jam magnus ab imis
 Auditur fremitus terris, templumque remugit
 Cecropium; sanctasque faces attollit Eleusin,
 Angues Triptolemi stridunt, et squamea curvis
 Colla levant attrita jugis.

De Rapt. Proserp. sub Init.

The poet, as he proceeds, becomes more enthusiastic, and exclaiming,

- - - Gressus removete, profani,
 Jam furor humanos de nostro pectore sensus
 Expulit - - -

he invokes the gods to permit him to disclose the

- - - res alta terra et caligine mersas,

which he had been taught in the mysteries. He continues—

Vos mihi sacrarum penetralia pandite rerum,
 Et vestra secreta poli, qua lampade Ditem
 Flexit amor, quo ducta ferox Proserpina raptu
 Possedit dotale Chaos; quantasque per orus
 Sollicito Genetrix erraverit anxia cursu;
 Unde datæ populis leges, et, glande relictæ,
 Cesserit inventis Dodonia quercus aristis.

Dion. Chrysostom gives a general idea of the process of initiation.

“The disciple is suddenly conducted into a mystic temple of pre-eminent magnificence and beauty. There he beholds astonishing visions, and hears extraordinary and mystic voices. Darkness and light succeed alternately to each other, and a thousand objects of uncommon and fantastic shape flit perpetually before the eyes.” Chrysost. In Orat. xii. See also, Themist. Orat. in Patrem, and Proclus, In Plat. Theol. lib. iii. c. 18. Stobæus is more minute and descriptive. “In the first stage of initiation the disciple appears to be involved in uncertainty and doubt. He is led along in gloom and darkness. A thousand voices and visions strike him with amazement, and his body is bathed in a profuse sweat. Then, in an instant, a new scene opens before him, decorated with verdure, and diversified with flowers. He is captivated by dances and songs, framed for his delight, and instructed in the secrets of true wisdom. Henceforth he is to know neither toil nor restraint. He is crowned with a flowery-wreath. His triumph is recorded. He walks as in the regions of the blessed, converses with wise and happy men, and celebrates the holy mysteries with continued delight.” Stobæus. Serm. cxix.

NOTE D. D. D. p. 363.

FROM Phryne, who had her statue of gold placed between the statues of two kings in the temple of Delphi, and who offered to rebuild the walls of Thebes, on the sole condition that it should be recorded that "Alexander diruit, sed meretrix Phryne refecit," Praxiteles and Apelles are said to have derived the model of their most perfect works; and if her symmetry and beauty inspired the former with the immortal idea of his Cnidian Venus, which was supposed to speak, and whose lips were kissed with devotional fervour by the votaries of the goddess; the latter but exhibited in the Venus Anodymene, which kings were anxious to purchase at any price, the form of the same Phryne which he had beheld in a bath, veiled only by the imperfect drapery of her long and dishevelled hair. Lucian, In *Ἐρωτικῇ*. Antholog. c. 11, 12, 13.

Nicomêdes, king of Bithynia, offered an immense sum for the Cnidian Venus. Pausan. lib. vii. c. 34. And Augustus Cæsar purchased the work of Apelles at the expense of three hundred talents. Strabo, lib. xiv.

The courtezans of Athens were as free as they were beautiful. Lasthenia, in pursuit probably of a lover, attended the lectures of the Academy; and Axisthea renounced her female dress, that she might listen among his scholars to the divine or mysterious precepts of Plato. Laert. In Plat. lib. iii. § 46. In Speusipp. lib. iv. § 2. Athenæ, lib. vii. p. 279. lib. xii. p. 546.

NOTE E. E. E. p. 428.

BEATTY, in his very imperfect view of "the sublime theory of rewards and punishments," announced by Virgil, speaks of those who, by so unequal a lot, had been confined to the Campos Lugentes, as persons "who had been of no use to mankind, or who had not been guilty of any very atrocious crimes, or whose crimes, though atrocious, were the effects of an unhappy destiny, rather than of wilful depravation." He who refuses to afford to Dido the justifying plea of an overruling fate, and who attributes her crime, not to the irresistible influence of three deities united against her, but to her own inordinate ambition and love, thinks he may ascribe the hideous depravity of a Phædra, an Eriphyle, and a Pasiphaë, to "an unhappy destiny." Now, if these were overruled by destiny, they were not criminal, and the poet has been unjust in assigning to them the melancholy

abode of the Mourning Plains; and, if they were not so overruled, he has equally violated the laws of a just retribution, in visiting them with a punishment so disproportionate to their guilt, and in classing them with those whose virtues might have merited recompence, and misfortunes commiseration. Essay on Truth, Part iii. ch. 2.

Warburton, in his Dissertation on the Sixth Book of Virgil, has, in the same manner, endeavoured to justify the misery inflicted in hell on the unburied dead. Servius is of a different opinion. *Iniqua enim sors puniri propter alterius negligentiam, nec enim quis culpa sua caret sepulchro.* And Bayle exclaims, "Quelle injustice! etoit ce la faut de ces ames que leur corps n'eussent pas ete enterré." *Reponse aux Quest. d'un Provin. part iii. c. 22.*

NOTE F. F. F. p. 432.

ZENONI Stoico animus, ignis videtur. Sed hoc quidem, quæ dixi, cor, sanguinem, cerebrum, animam, ignem, vulgo: reliqua fere singuli, ut multi ante veteres. Cic. Tusc. Disput. lib. i. § 9.

Aristoxenus ipsius corporis intentionem quandam, velut in cantu et fidibus, quæ harmonica dicitur, sic ex corporis totius natura et figura varios motus cieri, tanquam in cantu sonos. Tuscul. Disput. i. § 10.

Dicæarchus—differentem inducit, nihil esse omnino animum—neque in homine inesse animum vel animam, nec in bestia; vimque omnem eam, qua vel agamus, vel sentiamus, in omnibus corporibus vivis equitabiliter esse fusam, nec separabile a corpore esse. Tuscul. lib. i. § 10.

Aristoteles, cum quatuor nota illa principiorum esset complexus, e quibus omnia oriuntur, quintam quandam terram censet esse, e qua sit mens - - Quintum genus adhibet vacans nomine; et sic ipsum animum *πνιχμα* appellat novo nomine, quasi quondam continuatam motionem perennem. Tusc. i. § 10.

Macrobius (In Somn. Scip. lib. i. c. 14) has very briefly but explicitly enumerated, on these subjects, the extravagant dogmas of the Grecian schools. Plato dixit animam essentiam se moventem; Zenocrates, numerum se moventem; Aristoteles, intellectum seu motum perpetuum; Pythagoras harmoniam; Asclepiades quinque sensuum exercitium sibi consonam; Hippocrates spiritum tenuem per omne corpus diffusum; Heraclides Pontus lucem; Zeno concretum corpori spiritum; Democritus, spiritum incertum atomia; *Crotolaus Peripateticus* constare eam de quinta essentia; Empe-

docles sanguinem ; Parmenides ex terra et aqua ; Epicurus speciem ex igne et aëre et spiritu mixtam.

NOTE G. G. G. p. 438.

QUOD semper movetur æternum est. Solum quod se ipsum movet, quia nunquam deseritur a se, nunquam ne moveri quidem desinit. Quinetiam cæteris, quæ moventur, hoc principium est movendi. Principium autem nulla est origo, nam a principis oriuntur omnia, ipsum autem nulla ex re alia nasci potest - - - Cum pateat igitur, æternum id esse, quod se ipsum moveat, quis est qui hanc naturam animis esse tributam neget ? Nam hæc est propria natura animi, atque vis : quæ si est una ex omnibus, quæ se ipsa semper moveat, neque nata certe est, et æterna est. *Tuscul. Disputat. lib. i. § 23.*

The whole argument is admirably unfolded by Cicero, from the *Phædo* of Plato, who attributes it to Socrates ; and nothing can exceed the exultation with which the Roman orator dwells on this " elegant " and " subtle " demonstration of the immortality of the soul.

All the ancients, says Cudworth, prior to Christianity, who held the existence of the soul after death, asserted the eternity of its pre-existence ; and this was affirmed on the principle that, if it were once granted that the soul was generated, it could never be proved that it might not also perish. The proof, therefore, of the immortality of the soul commenced with the proof of its pre-existence. Cicero explains the opinion of the philosophers on this subject, and, perhaps, his own, by the word—*sempiternus*, which is properly applicable only to that which has neither beginning nor end.

Almost all the masters of the ancient schools attributed the same anterior and posterior eternity to matter, which, in the preceding argument, is attributed to soul. Whatever has being, it was affirmed, possessed it always, and shall always possess it. The substances of things are indebted only for their form to the hand of the Almighty ; and Omnipotence, divested of its creative energy, was limited to the operation of shaping into a world a primitive and unformed mass, directly as the sculptor or the architect produces the statue or the temple from the marble of the quarry.

Aristotelem, et plerosque Peripateticorum, in vulgus notum est, in hac fuisse sententia, nec natum esse, nec interitum unquam hunc mundum. *Pet. Gassend. Phyc. lib. i. sect. 1. c. 6.* See also, *Thomasius de Stoicâ exustione mundi. Dissertat. iv. Lucret.*

lib. i. v. 150. Aristotel, lib. i. c. 5. Mosheim's Edition of Cudworth's Intellect. Syst. lib. i. c. 3. sect. 33.

NOTE H. H. H.

[*Reference omitted in p. 440.*]

CICERO has translated this speech with his usual felicity of language. It every where betrays the doubts of Socrates; and the philosopher appears to fluctuate between the doctrine of immortality and of an eternal sleep. "Magna me spes tenet, iudices, bene mihi evenire, quod mittar ad mortem. Necesse est enim sit alterum duobus, ut aut sensus omnino mors omnes auferat, aut in alium quendam locum ex his locis morte migretur. Quamobrem, sive sensus extinguetur, morsque ei somno similis est, qui nonnunquam etiam sine visis somniorum placidissimam quietem affert, dii boni! quid lucri est emori? Si vera sunt quæ dicuntur migrationem esse mortem, in eas oras, quas, qui e vita excesserunt, incolunt, id multo jam beatius est, te, cum ab iis, qui se iudicum numero haberi volunt, evaseris, ad eos venire qui vere iudices appellantur, Minoem, Rhadamanthum, Cæacum, Triptolemum - - - Sed tempus est, jam hinc abire me, ut moriar; vos, ut vitam agatis. Utrum autem sit melius, dii immortales sciunt: hominem quidam scire arbitror neminem." *Tuscul. Disput. lib. i. § xli.*

NOTE I. I. I. p. 566.

THE Vedas consist of three candas, or treatises, on faith, works, and worship. They are a compilation of prayers, hymns, and incantations, called Mantras, and of precepts called Brahmana. Of the hymns the subjects are various, and often ludicrous. Some are addressed to the guardian spirits of dwelling-houses, some to clouds, to vapours, to the firmament, the moon, water, air, the spirit of the earth, frogs, house-dogs, and other animals. He who repeats one of these, with the prescribed forms, is to insure a happy life for a hundred years; the proper recitation of another is to produce a fall of rain in five days; and none can be pronounced, after due oblations and fasts, without being followed by some proportional good. The incantations are often of a frightful character. They afford a striking evidence of the religious ferocity which invented or practised them; and are supposed to bring down the gods personally, to co-operate with the cruelty and malignity of man.

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Asiat. Research. v. viii. 377, 380, 381. Id. vol. i. 348; and vol. viii. 470, 471.

Colonel Polier collected a copy of the four Vedas. It extended to eleven large volumes. These Vedas were supposed to contain all the information, moral, religious, civil, and physical, necessary to man. Dissertat. from the Asiat. Research. p. 400.

From the Vedas are derived the four Upavedas, the six Angas, and the four Upangas.

The Upavedas contain the theory of disease and of cure, the science of music, an explanation of the sixty-four mechanical arts, and dissertations on the forms and uses of implements of war.

Of the six Angas, the first treats of the pronunciation of words; the second, of religious institutions and rules; the third, of the properties and construction of language; the fourth, of the laws of prosody, with partial reference to the metre of incantations and charms; the fifth, of the system of astronomy; and the last, of the obscure passages, or difficult terms, to be found in the Vedas.

The four Upangas are divided into Purana, Nyaya, Mimansa, and Dherma Sastra; and these again are branched out into various subdivisions, in each of which is discussed some difficulty of the sacred text, some theory of good and evil, some doctrine of moral or civil duty, some dogma of the nature and attributes of God, some law or quality of natural bodies, or some position of philosophers and the schools.

The Puranas, which constitute one subdivision of the Upangas, are eighteen in number. These contain nearly 500,000 stanzas. The rest of the Upangas about a million more. Sir W. Jones' Works, vol. iv. p. 102.

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